The Duty of an Apoſtatizing People to remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their firſt Works.

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1—16.

A

SERMON

Preached before His EXCELLENCY

Jonathan Belcher, Eſq;

The HONOURABLE

His Majeſty's COUNCIL,

And the Honourable Houſe of REPRESENTATIVES of the Province of the *Maſſachuſetts-Bay* in *New England*,

May 25th. 1737.

Being the Anniverſary for the Election of His Majeſty's COUNCIL for the Province.

By **Iſrael Loring**, A. M.
Paſtor of a Church in *Sudbury*.

BOSTON: Printed by S. KNEELAND, Printer to the Honourable Houſe of REPRESENTATIVES. 1737.

In the Houſe of Repreſentatives.

Jovis 26. Die Maij, A. D. 1737.

ORdered, That *Francis Fullam*, Eſq; and Mr. *Edward Sherman*, return the Thanks of the Houſe to the Reverend Mr. *Iſrael Loring* of *Sudbury*, for his Sermon preached yeſterday before the Great and General Court or Aſſembly, (being the Anniverſary for the Election of Councellors or Aſſiſtants for the Year currant) and deſire a Copy thereof for the Preſs.

J. Quincy, Speaker.

BRITISH MUSEUM

An Election SERMON.

Rev. II. 5.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first Works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove the Candlestick out of his Place, except thou repent.

IT is at the Call of the late honourable *House of Representatives*, that I stand in this Desk to Day; and it is my Purpose (in a humble Dependance on divine Assistance) from the Words which I have now read in this great Audience, to discourse of the Degeneracies, that the People of this Land are fallen into, and to urge all Orders of Men both *civil* and *sacred*, to endeavour a Reformation of what is amiss. I have not a Word to offer by Way of Apology, for this Design and Intention of mine.

Some

Some have choſen thus to do rather than to inſiſt upon any Subject, that had a direct Aſpect on the Affairs of the Day, and the Duty of the Electors to have a ſpecial Regard to the Qualities of Councellors in the Choice of 'em. And the Reaſon (it ſeems) that has influenced them, was this, " Becauſe they look'd upon it as an Impro-
" priety, and altogether in vain to ſpeak of ne-
" ceſſary Qualities, when the Perſons themſelves
" are already fix'd upon, and (in Effect) choſen
" before this ; and that perhaps without any Re-
" gard to their Qualities, only that they are ſuch
" as will be ſure to anſwer that Party-Cauſe and
" Intereſt they are deſigned for. But this is a
" Reaſon, that I utterly diſclaim, in what I am
" going about ; and would hope quite other Things,
" and better Things, of the honourable Perſons,
" that are concerned in the Elections of this Day.

This Book wherein we find our Text, is ſo full of divine Majeſty, that it commands an awful Reverence in all gracious Hearts that read it. It was indited by Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, the faithful and true Witneſs. *John* the beloved and boſom Diſciple, and laſt Apoſtle, was the Pen-man of it. Chap. i. Ver. 1. *The Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, which God gave unto him, to ſhew unto his Servants Things which muſt ſhortly come to paſs ; and he ſent and ſignified it by his angel unto his Servant John.*

For the Time of his writing it, himſelf tells us, *Chap.* i. 9. That it was while he was in *Patmos*, for the Word of God, and the Teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt. This was (if we may believe Hiſtory, and we have nothing elſe to inform us) in the Time of *Domitian* the Roman Emperor, about the ninety-fourth or ninety-fifth Year after the Nativity of Chriſt.

The

The Things which *John* deſcribes and writes are of two Sorts, as Chriſt himſelf ranks them, Chap. i. 19. viz. Firſt, The Things that are. Secondly, The Things that ſhall be hereafter.

The Things that are, have a Reſpect to the State of the ſeven *Aſian* Churches, ſignified by the ſeven Golden-Candleſticks, viſionally repreſented unto the beloved Apoſtle; for ſo our Lord himſelf expounds the Viſion, Ch. i. 20. *The ſeven Candleſticks which thou ſaweſt, are the ſeven Churches.*

Now the Things which concern theſe ſeven Churches, are laid down in ſeven particular Epiſtles, directed primarily to the ſeven Angels of the ſeven Churches. Secondarily, With and in them, to the ſeven Churches themſelves.

Our Text lies in the firſt of the Epiſtles, inſcribed unto the Angel of the Church of *Epheſus*, *Chap.* ii. 1. I will not here waſte my Time with any Diſcourſe concerning the Situation of the City of *Epheſus*, nor yet with a Reſolution of the Context by any analytical Expoſition of the Epiſtle.

In the Words before us, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt expreſſes himſelf highly offended at the Church of *Epheſus*, for an Apoſtacy whereinto they were apace degenerating. An Apoſtacy was the Thing complained of; and the Remedy preſcribed for the Cure of that Malady, and to which this Church was exhorted, was Repentance. *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the firſt Works.*

This Repentance is preſſed with a dreadful Commination, big with Wo and Miſery. The Judgment

Judgment threatned, is no leſs than the Removal of the Candleſtick out of it's Place; which means our Lord's unchurching them, & ſaying unto them, *Loammi, you are not my People.* What the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in our Text ſays to the Church of *Epheſus* is this, *Repent,* and by Repentance recover out of thy Apoſtacy; or elſe I will diſchurch thee, diſown thee, deſtroy thee.

But then in this Threatning, this Promiſe is ſtrongly implied, *viz.* that if this Church did thus repent, their Church-State ſhould graciouſly be continued unto them.

Accordingly, from the Words, theſe three Doctrines may be obſerved.

Doct. 1. That it is the great Duty of apoſtatizing Churches to remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their firſt Works. *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the firſt Works.*

Doct. 2. That if declining Churches thus do, the Lord Jeſus will graciouſly continue their Church State unto them.

Doct. 3. That unleſs apoſtatizing Churches do repent, they will provoke the Lord Jeſus to unchurch them, and deſtroy them. *I will remove thy Candleſtick out of his Place, except thou repent.*

To each of theſe in their Order.

DOCT. I. *It is the great Duty of apoſtatizing Churches to remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their firſt Works.*

This

This Doctrine may be ſpoken unto, under theſe two Heads or Propoſitions.

I. *Churches have many times been guilty of Declenſions and Apoſtacies.*

II. *When they become thus guilty, it is their great Duty to remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their firſt Works.*

PROP. I. *Churches have many times been guilty of Declenſions and Apoſtacies.*

So it was with the Church of Iſrael. How frequently do we find God complaining of this, by the Mouth of his holy Prophets? They turned quickly out of the Way which their Fathers walked in, obeying the Commandments of the Lord; but they did not ſo. They were planted by God a noble Vine, wholly a right Seed; but they turned into the degenerate Plant of a ſtrange unto him, *Jer.* ii. 21.

And as it was thus with the Church of God under the *legal Diſpenſation*, ſo it has been with many chriſtian Churches under the *evangelical*. During the Days of the Apoſtles themſelves, and notwithſtanding their wiſe, diligent and careful Inſpection over the Churches planted by them; yet there were Declenſions in many of them. And in ſucceeding Ages, far greater Defections from the Goſpel befell the Churches of Chriſt, agreeable to what thoſe holy Men of God foretold.

Apoſtacies and Declenſions among Churches, have appeared ſeveral Ways.

1. Some-

1. *Sometimes in Matters of Doctrine.* They reject Knowlege, which is the firſt Step to Piety, and without which the Mind can't be good. They renounce and forſake the Truths of the Goſpel, which is the very Ground-Work of Holineſs. And this they do two Ways.

1. *By Ignorance.* A knowing intelligent People, in Continuance of Time, may become ignorant and Children in Underſtanding! 'Twas thus with the People of *Iſrael*, Hoſ. iv. 1. *There is no Knowlege of God in the Land.* It ſpeaks the univerſal Ignorance that was among them. Babes may ſucceed thoſe, who by Reaſon of Uſe, had their Senſes exerciſed to diſcern between Good and Evil. And this may proceed ſometimes from ſuitable Means being withheld from a People. Family Inſtruction is neglected, a due Care to catechiſe the riſing Generation in the Principles of Religion, is not maintained; neither are Schools of Learning for their religious Education, cheriſhed as they ought to be; and if the Guides and Teachers of a People ſhould prove unable, or unfaithful to teach them the good Knowlege of the Lord, no wonder if they be ignorant.

Sometimes a People's Ignorance proceeds from their own Sloth and Negligence. They will not improve the Means of Inſtruction, which they are favoured with. Neglect the Reading of God's holy Word; will not ſeek the Law at the Mouth of their able and faithful Guides; are not careful to give their Attendance on their publick and private Inſtructions. Hence when *for the Time they ought to be Teachers, they have need that one ſhould teach them again, the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God; and are become ſuch as have need of Milk, and not of ſtrong Meat.*

2. *By*

2. *By Errors.* They fall from the Truth which they have heard and received, and turn aſide to lies. This in a ſad Degree was the Caſe of the Church of *Corinth.* It was planted by the Apoſtle *Paul*, who we may be ſure, kept back nothing that was profitable unto them. They were watered by *Apollos*, an eloquent Man and mighty in the Scriptures, & therefore beyond Queſtion fully inſtructed by them in all the Principles of Religion ; and yet many of them quickly fell into that fundamental Error of denying the *Reſurrection of the Dead*, 1 Cor. xv.

A yet more pregnant Inſtance of what we have now under Conſideration, are the Churches of *Galatia.* Planted they were by the Miniſtry of the ſame Apoſtle ; and tho' he declared unto them the whole Counſel of God, yet we may well think, that in nothing did he labour more than to eſtabliſh them in the Knowlege and Belief of that grand Article of Chriſtianity, The Juſtification of Sinners by Faith in the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt ; for this was the principal Scope & Deſign of his Miniſtry, in the whole Courſe of it. This Doctrine was embraced with ſuch Joy and Satisfaction, that they prized the Apoſtle as an Angel of God, received him as Jeſus Chriſt, and valued him above the Sight of their own Eyes, *Chap.* iv. 14, 15. And yet after all this, on a ſudden, to his Surprize and Amazement, they renounced the Doctrine of Juſtification by Faith only, to ſeek after a Righteouſneſs, as it were, by the Works of the Law. Gal. i. 6, 7. *I marvel, that ye are ſo ſoon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Chriſt, unto another Goſpel : Which is not another ; but there be ſome that trouble you, and would pervert the Goſpel of Chriſt.*

There are abundance of Temptations to Errors. There are Temptations from *without*. Satan is the grand Seducer, and ſtands continually ready to act his Part to the utmoſt, for the Deluſion of Men. 2 Cor. iv. 4. *The God of this World hath blinded their Minds.*

Moreover, There are heretical Teachers, that bend their Wits, and buſy themſelves in wreſting the Scriptures, and venting their dangerous Errors, to the Deſtruction of themſelves and many others. 2 Pet. ii. 1. *There ſhall be falſe Teachers among you, who ſhall privily bring in damnable Hereſies.*

And there are many Temptations from *within*, as well as from without. The uncured Enmity in the Minds of carnal Men to ſpiritual Things, betrays them into erroneous Tenets; and ſo does the Pride of Reaſon, rendring them unwilling to admit any Doctrines in Chriſtianity, which are not level with it: Their vain Affectation of appearing ſome great ones, and the Power and Prevalency of other vile Luſts and Corruptions.

Many Errors have prevailed in the Church of God. Particularly, *Arianiſm* has ſo done, and ſo has *Pelagianiſm*, and *Popery*, and *Socinianiſm* and *Arminianiſm*, which laſt is, (as a learned Man obſerves †) the ſecond Edition of *Pelagianiſm*, Pelagianiſm in Miniature, and a compendious Draught of it.

2. *Sometimes Churches are guilty of Apoſtacy in Point of Worſhip.*

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† Dr. *Edwards* in his Theol. Refor. Vol. 2. p. 491.

And

And this ſeveral Ways.

1. *By corrupting the Worſhip of God.*

And there are eſpecially two Things, which corrupt it.

One is, an Admittance of Perſons to that Worſhip of God, which they are unfit for, and have no Right unto. There are two Sorts of Worſhip with which Men are to glorify God: A *natural* and an *inſtituted* Worſhip. As for *natural Worſhip* (ſuch as hearing the Word & Prayer) it is every Man's immediate Duty to attend upon it. But it is otherwiſe with *inſtituted Worſhip*. Men ought to be prepared and made meet for it, before they attend it. When *John* ſaw the Phariſees and Scribes come to his Baptiſm, he ſaid unto them, *O Generation of Vipers, Who hath warned you to flee from the Wrath to come? Bring forth therefore Fruits meet for Repentance.* 1 Cor. xi. 28. *But let a Man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.* When *holy Things* are given unto *Dogs*, the holy Inſtitutions of Chriſt to ſuch as are viſibly unclean, this is to corrupt them. Ezek. xliv. 7. *Ye have brought into my Sanctuary Strangers uncircumciſed in Heart, and uncircumciſed in Fleſh, to be in my Sanctuary to pollute it, even my Houſe.*

The other Thing that corrupts the Worſhip of God, is the *adding to it*, or *taking from it*. To curtail the Worſhip of God, and diminiſh from it; muſt needs deprave it. And ſo does the Addition of any humane Inſtitutions to it. Men are very prone to interweave their own Inventions and ſignificant Ceremonies into, and make them Parts of the Worſhip of God, thinking thereby to mend it:

it: but as this is an Invaſion on his Sovereignty, and a great Reflection caſt upon his Wiſdom and Faithfulneſs; ſo it mars his Worſhip, and ſpoils its Beauty, and makes it to be to little or no Purpoſe. Matth. xv. 9. *But in vain do they worſhip me, teaching for Doctrines, the Commandments of Men.*

2. *By neglecting the Worſhip of God, or any Part of it.*

And here particularly,

1. *Sometimes ſecret Worſhip is neglected.* Many do not yield a due Obſervance to that plain and expreſs Injunction of our Lord, Matth. vi. 6. *Enter into thy Cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy Door, pray to thy Father which is in Secret.* Nor do they walk as he walked, who was frequently engaged in the Duty of ſecret Prayer. Of our bleſſed Saviour we read, Matth. xiv. 23. *He went apart to pray: and when the Evening was come, he was alone.* And Mark i. 35. *In the Morning he departed into a ſolitary Place, and there prayed.* Perhaps ſomething of this is done by Fits and Starts; but they don't obſerve any ſet ſolemn Times, Morning and Evening, for this great Duty. Or when it is thus attended, yet it may be, many neglect that which is of the moſt perſonal and ſpecial Concernment to their own Souls. Perſons may pray in Secret, and yet not utter a Word which is of moſt ſecret Concernment to themſelves, and their own Souls; but what may be expreſſed before a Family or Congregation. And thus one principal End of ſecret Prayer is loſt; viz. the Confeſſion of ſecret Sins, and petitioning for thoſe perſonal Mercies and ſecret Bleſſings, which we cannot ſo properly and conveniently ask before others.

2. *Sometimes*

2. *Sometimes Family-Worſhip and Duties are neglected.* As the offering up the morning and evening Sacrifice of Prayer and Praiſe; the Reading of God's Word daily; and inſtructing the Family by catechiſing, and other ſutable and profitable Means, as is required, *Deut.* vi. 7. And this Neglect in ſome Families may be total, in others partial. Family-Duties may be wholly omitted in ſome Families, and in others, but in Part performed. If there be Prayer on the Lord's Day, yet little or none all the Week after. If in the Morning, yet none in the Evening; or if in the Evening, yet none in the Morning; or if in the Morning and Evening, yet the ſolemn Reading God's Word is not made a Part of the daily Family-Worſhip; or if theſe be attended, yet perhaps a careful inſtructing of the Children of the Family is neglected, or not duly performed.

3. *Sometimes the publick Worſhip of God is diſregarded.* His Authority enjoining it is ſlighted; the ſacred Proviſions of Sion are deſpiſed; and the publick Aſſemblies of God's People on the Lord's Days, as well as on Lecture Days, are not attended, as ſhould be. Some are ſo far from keeping God's Sabbaths, and reverencing his Sanctuary, by a conſtant Attendance on the Worſhip of it; that they are ſeldom there at all. Some are ready to content themſelves with going up to the Houſe of God, on one Part of the Lord's Day only. And others come very unſeaſonably, to the depriving themſelves of ſome Part of the publick Worſhip; and the Diſtraction and drawing off the Minds of others, from that Part of it, which is in Hand. Men, that they may indulge an indolent Spirit, are very forward to frame Excuſes, to ſtay away from the Houſe of God. Light Indiſpoſitions

ons of Body, ſmall Difficulties of the Weather, and Diſtance of the Way, which would be eaſily overlook'd, to compaſs a worldly Deſign, to obtain ſome worldly Advantage, will keep them at Home. So Men forſake the Lord, and forget his holy Mountain.

3. *By Formality in the Worſhip of God.* A profeſſing People are many Times ſuperficial in divine Worſhip. It is external, and not animated with ſpiritual Frames, which are the Soul of it. They have with the Church of *Sardis* a Name to live, but are dead. A Form of Godlineſs, but deny the Power thereof. They celebrate *Sabbaths*, and yet have no ſpiritual Reſt: Obſerve *Faſts* without godly Sorrow and Brokenneſs of Heart for Sin; keep *Thankſgivings*, without a thankful Heart, or holy Rejoycing in God. They draw near to God with their Mouth, and with their Lips do honour him, while their Hearts are removed from him. They put off God with external Services, but little regard to yield him a reaſonable one, i. e. directed by their Underſtandings, and accompanied with their Affections. To Appearance they are devout in attending on Ordinances, yet little or nothing of ſincere Devotion in their Worſhip. Ezek. xxxiii. 31. *They come to thee, as the People cometh, and they ſit before thee, as my People, and they hear thy Words, but they will not do them; for with their Mouth they ſhew much Love, but their Heart goeth after their Covetouſneſs.*

4. *Sometimes Churches are guilty of Apoſtacy in Point of Diſcipline.*

Here I might ſay,

1. *Sometimes*

1. *Sometimes there is a great Neglect of Family-Diſcipline and Government among a profeſſing People.* The Authority with which Heads of Families are veſted by God, is not maintained, nor exerted by them, as ought to be. Many chriſtian *Houſholders* don't practice as *Abraham* did, of whom God gives this Commendation, Gen. xviii. 19. *I know him, that he will command his Children, and his Houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Juſtice and Judgment.* They are very remiſs, in exerciſing a due Government over their Children and Servants. Don't rule well their own Houſes. Children are ſuffered to frequent the Taverns, get into bad Company, to ramble up and down in the Evening, when they ſhould be at Home to attend Family-Worſhip; in the dark and ſilent Night, when they ſhould be in their Beds. They are let alone, to run intoTemptations to Sin, and take bad Courſes without Check or Controul. *They make themſelves vile*, and their Parents *reſtrain them not.*

But then,

2. *Sometimes Churches grow very careleſs in Church-Diſcipline.* The Power of Diſcipline, which is Chriſt's own Expedient for the Preſervation of Churches in Purity, is not kept up as it ſhould be, and as it has been. "The Snuffers of the Sanctuary are not regularly and faithfully uſed; hence the Gold of the Candleſticks becomes Droſs apace". Churches can bear with thoſe that are Evil. They are not careful to *purge out the old Leaven*; and to make a Separation between the *Precious and the Vile, the Clean and Unclean.* Perſons don't in brotherly Love, watch over one anothers Souls faithfully, and as they ought to do. That in Lev. xix. 17. *Thou ſhalt not hate thy Brother*

ther in thine Heart: Thou ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy Neighbour, and not ſuffer Sin upon him; has not it's due Influence upon them. They are not careful to attend Chriſt's Rule and Expedient laid down in *Matth.* xviii. for the healing and removing private Offences. They too often vent their own Pride and Paſſions, and ſerve their own Humours; inſtead of dealing with their offending Brother, in a humble, meek, compaſſionate and tender Way for his Recovery.

5. *A profeſſing People are ſometimes guilty of Degeneracy, in Reſpect of Life and Converſation.* Practical Religion runs low among them, they grow very corrupt in their Morals. Temptations to Sin are multiplied, and Men give way to 'em, and are overcome by 'em, and evil Practices prevail among them. *The Love of many waxes cold*, and Sin and Iniquity abounds. Pride, Contempt of, and Diſobedience to Superiours, Contention, Idleneſs, Intemperance, Uncleanneſs, inordinate Paſſions, ſinful Heats and Hatreds, Backbitings, Tale-bearing, Want of Truth, Promiſe-breaking, inordinate Affection to the World, Injuſtice, Oppreſſion, and Strait-handedneſs as to publick Concerns. Their Carriage is not as becomes the Goſpel. Their Behaviour does not adorn, but brings a Reproach upon the Profeſſion, which they make, Iſai. i. 4. *Ah ſinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, a Seed of Evil-doers, Children that are Corrupters, they have forſaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy one of Iſrael unto Anger, they are gone backward.*

Thus Churches, or a profeſſing People, many times become guilty of Declenſions and Apoſtacies. I come now to ſay,

2. *That*

2. *That when Churches are thus guilty, it is their great Duty to remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their firſt Works.*

And here,

1. *They ſhould remember from whence they are fallen.* That is, in what Degree their Purity & Piety was formerly, and compare it with what it is now. This will help them to a clearer Diſcovery of their ſad Declenſions and Decays; and may be ſerviceable to forward their Repentance. So the Lord's People of old, comparing the Glory of the firſt Temple with that of the latter, and finding this as nothing to that, they wept with a loud Voice. Compare *Hagai* ii. 3. with *Ezra* iii. 12.

But,

2. *They muſt repent of their Sins, by which they have apoſtatized from God.*

Here I will briefly conſider the Nature of this great Duty, to which declining Churches are ſtrongly obliged. Now Repentance includes in it,

1. *A thorough Conviction of the Evil that there is in Sin againſt God.*

Sin is contrary to the holy Law, Nature & Glory of God. By ſinning Men make void God's Law, caſt off his Government, trample upon his Sovereignty, deſpiſe his Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Holineſs, and Omniſcience. When Men ſin, they ſlight the Promiſes of God, by which he would allure them to Obedience; and ſet at nought his terrible Power and Juſtice, as if they might ſin and yet ſecure themſelves from his Indignation. By Sin God's glorious Attributes are denied or contemned, and he is greatly wronged. And it was

this, that pierced and wounded our Saviour, yea, broke his Heart and fetch'd from him that bitter Exclamation when upon the Croſs, *My God! My God! Why haſt thou forſaken me?* Moreover, it's what grieves the kind and good Spirit, *Eph.* iv. 30. Now a Sight and Senſe of the Evil of Sin in theſe Reſpects, is firſtly implied in Repentance. Whereas many are ſo fooliſh, as to *make a Mock at Sin*, to think ſlightly about it; the true Penitent has quite other Thoughts of it, and beholds it, as exceeding ſinful.

2. *True Repentance includes in it, godly Sorrow for Sin.* 2*Cor.* vii. 10. Some have grieved for Sin, and yet have had nothing of this godly Sorrow for Sin. Their Grief proceeds from the Apprehenſion of the Wrath and Curſe of God which purſues them, and is ready to ſeize on them. This is a legal Sorrow, a grieving for Sin as againſt a Man's ſelf; becauſe it has betrayed him to Death and Damnation. In this Senſe, Hypocrites, yea, Reprobates may ſorrow and mourn for Sin. *Judas* repented himſelf, ſaying, *I have ſinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent Blood, --- and went and hanged himſelf*, Mat. xxvii. 3. 4. 5. But godly Sorrow is a ſaving Grace of the Spirit, and has Sin as a Wrong to God for the Object of it. So the *penitent Prodigal*, when his Heart was truly broken within him, he came to his Father, and ſays, *I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and in thy Sight*, Luke xv. 21. 'Twas the Wrong that he had done to the God of Heaven, that troubled him. And this was that which ſat ſo heavy upon *David*'s mournful Soul, Pſalm li. 4. *Againſt thee, thee only have I ſinned, and done this Evil in thy Sight.*

Again, Godly Sorrow is a mourning for Sin, as it has wounded our Saviour, Zech. xii. 10. *I will*

pour

pour upon the Houſe of David, and upon the Inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, and they ſhall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they ſhall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only Son, and ſhall be in Bitterneſs for him, as one that is in Bitterneſs for his Firſt-born. The true Penitent, realizing the Death and Sufferings of his Saviour, and conſidering that it was his Sins, that were the procuring, meritorious Cauſe of them; therefore does he lament and bewail them.

Once more, The true Penitent grieves for his Sins, becauſe thereby he has grieved the Spirit of God. The ſerious Conſideration of the Benefits which he has received from this kind and good Spirit, and of his unworthy & diſingenuous Carriage towards him, opens the Springs of his Sorrow, and melts his Heart into the Current of evangelical Mourning for Sin.

3. *Another Thing included in Repentance, is an Hatred of Sin.* Natural Men love their Sins, and roul them as a ſweet Morſel under their Tongues: They are as dear to them, as their right Hands, or right Eyes. But in Repentance, this Love is turned into Hatred. Hence ſays *David*, Pſalm cxix. 104. *I hate every falſe Way.* The true Penitent hates the Name, and abhors the Nature of Sin. Yea, he loaths himſelf upon the Account of it. Job xlii. 6. *I abhor my ſelf, and repent in Duſt and Aſhes.* Ezek. xxxvi. 31. *Then ſhall ye remember your own evil Ways, and your Doings that were not good, and ſhall loath your ſelves in your own Sight, for your Iniquities, and for your Abominations.*

4. *Another Thing included in Repentance, is Shame for Sin.* Sin is a moſt ſhameful Thing, whether we

we conſider it in Relation to our ſelves, or in Reſpect to God, againſt whom, and in whoſe ſight it is committed. And yet ſuch is the Blindneſs of Men's Minds by Nature, that they glory in it. *Phil.* iii. 19. But the true Penitent ſees the Baſeneſs of the Thing; and the Diſgrace and Diſhonour, Infamy and Reproach that he has brought upon himſelf thereby; and is covered with Confuſion at the Thoughts of it. Thus *Ezra* teſtified his Repentance, Chap. ix. 6. *O my God, I am aſhamed, and bluſh to lift up my Face to thee, my God: For our Iniquities are increaſed over our Heads, and our Treſpaſs is grown up unto the Heavens.* And ſo the *Publican*, Luke xviii. 13. *Who ſtanding afar off, would not lift up ſo much as his Eyes to Heaven, but ſmote upon his Breaſt, ſaying, God be merciful to me a Sinner.*

5. *True Repentance is attended with a free and hearty Confeſſion of Sin.* Thus practiſed *David*, Pſalm xxxviii. 18. *For I will declare mine Iniquity, I will be ſorry for my Sin.* So Pſalm li. 3. *For I acknowlege my Tranſgreſſion, and my Sin is ever before me.* He that will not ſo much as confeſs his Sins to God, and own that it would be a righteous Thing with him to inflict upon him the Puniſhment which he deſerves; can never be thought to repent of them, or ſhare in his Mercy. *He that covereth his Sins, ſhall not proſper: but whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh them, ſhall find Mercy.*

6. and finally, *That Repentance which the Goſpel calls for, includes in it a turning from, and forſaking of Sin.* 1 Kings viii. 35. *If they turn from their Sin, ---forgive the Sin of thy Servants.* And where there is unfeigned and thorough Repentance, there is a turning not only from ſome, but all Sins; Ezek. xviii. 30.

xviii. 30. *Repent and turn your ſelves from all your Tranſgreſſions, ſo Iniquity ſhall not be your Ruin.* One Sin allowed of, or indulged, is inconſiſtent with true Repentance. And this turning from Sin, muſt not be only for a Time, but for ever. Hoſ. xiv. 8. *Ephraim ſhall ſay, What have I to do any more with Idols?*

Thus I have deſcribed the Nature of that Repentance, which Churches when backſliden from God, are called upon to practice.

3. *They muſt do their firſt Works.* "They muſt "as it were begin again, go back ſtep by "ſtep, till they come to the Place where they "took the firſt falſe ſtep".† They muſt endeavour to recover their primitive Purity of *Doctrine*, of *Worſhip*, of *Diſcipline*, and *Morals*. They muſt revive their firſt Love to God and their Brethren, and regain their former Zeal for good Works. And this may ſuffice for the firſt Doctrine.

I proceed now to the ſecond Doctrine, viz.

DOCT. II. *That if declining Churches thus do, the Lord Jeſus will graciouſly continue their Church-State unto them.*

Their Candleſtick then ſhall not be removed out of it's Place, nor will the Lord remove his Goſpel-Miniſters and Ordinances from them. It may be ſaid of Churches, as it is ſaid of a Nation or Kingdom, in Jer. xviii. 7, 8. *At what Inſtant the Lord ſpeaks concerning them, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy them; if* ſuch Churches *againſt whom*

† *Henry* in loc.

he

he hath pronounced turn from their Evil, he will repent of the Evil, that he thought to do unto them. When backſliding Churches return to God, he will return to them. Mal. iii. 7. *Even from the Days of your Fathers, ye are gone away from mine Ordinances, and have not kept them: return unto me, and I will return unto you.* The Lord will aſſuredly, be with his profeſſing People, while they are with him. 2 Chron. xv. 2. *Hear ye me Aſa, and all Judah and Benjamin, the Lord is with you, while ye be with him.* And if all manner of Bleſſings are enwrapped in this bleſſed Preſence of God; then ſurely a People's ſacred *Immunities* and *Privileges.*

While Churches continue golden Candleſticks, the Lord Jeſus will be in the midſt of them, *Rev.* i. 13. And he will make it manifeſt that he is ſo, by the Protection and Defence vouchſafed to them. Iſai. xxvii. 2, 3. *In that Day ſing ye unto her, a Vineyard of red Wine. I the Lord do keep it, --- leaſt any hurt it, I will keep it Night and Day.* Churches that are a Vineyard of red Wine, yielding the beſt and choiceſt Grapes; ſuch Churches are, and ſhall always be, under the Wing of Chriſt's Protection. I the Lord that can do every thing, but cannot lie nor deceive, I do keep it; leaſt any hurt it. Theſe Vineyards lie much expoſed to Injury; there are many that would hurt them, tread them down, and lay them waſte: But God their Saviour will ſuffer no real Hurt or Damage to be done 'em, but what he will bring good out of. He will keep them conſtantly Night and Day, and not without Need; for their Enemies are reſtleſs, and unwearied in their Attempts and Deſigns againſt them; and both Night and Day ſeek an Opportunity to do them a Miſchief.

While

While Churches continue Vineyards of red Wine, bringing forth Fruit to God ; he will not ſuffer perſecuting Enemies to ſcatter them ; nor Seducers and falſe Teachers to miſlead them. In a Word, The Gates of Hell, the Power and Policy of Satan, and all his Agents and Inſtruments, ſhall not prevail againſt them.

Moreover, Chriſt will vouchſafe the Tokens of his Preſence with ſuch Churches, in watering, as well as in defending them ; *I will water it every Moment.* He will ſupply them with all neceſſary Proviſions ; with his Ordinances, and the gracious Influences of his Holy Spirit. The ſtill and ſilent Dews of God's Grace and Bleſſing, ſhall continually deſcend upon them, that they may bring forth much Fruit.

I come now to the third Doctrine.

DOCT. III. *That unleſs apoſtatizing Churches do repent, they will provoke the Lord to unchurch them, and deſtroy them.*

It's true, the *catholick Church* cannot be loſt. There is a Promiſe concerning the Church in general, that it ſhall never fail. It is built upon a Rock, and let the Gates of Hell do their worſt, it ſhall ſtand, *Matth.* xvi. 18. Chriſt ever had, and ever will have a Church on Earth. We read concerning that City of God, that *ſhe ſhall not be moved.* And that *the higheſt himſelf ſhall eſtabliſh her.* And concerning this Mount Zion, that it *abideth for ever.*

But then a *particular Church* may fail, and there is not one particular Church, but what is liable to an utter Extirpation. Churches for their Sins and

Defections may be unchurched, and Candleſticks removed.

Many ſad and deplorable Inſtances of this Nature may be produced.

So the golden Candleſtick of the *jewiſh Church*, was removed. They *were broken off, becauſe of Unbelief.* The Jews had the offer of Chriſt made unto them ; yea, the firſt Offer, but they rejected it, and hereupon God rejected them, and the Kingdom of God was taken from them, and in this woful Condition, do they remain to this Day.

Upon the Rejection of the *Jews*, the *Gentiles* were called in, and many Churches gathered out of them. And many of theſe Churches, for their grievous Neglects and Contempts of the Covenant of God, have been diſchurched by him.

What *Epheſus* was threatned with in our Text, is fulfilled upon that, and the other ſix Churches of the leſſer *Aſia*. The Candleſticks are removed out of their Places.

Thoſe once famous Churches that had a gracious and glorious Preſence of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in them, for *he walked in the midſt of thoſe golden Candleſticks* ; I ſay, theſe Churches have ſinned away the Goſpel, and the Glory of a pure Church-State is taken from them. The Chriſtian Name, which yet they wear, is in a Manner all of Chriſtianity, that is left among them. They are wofully overwhelmed with Ignorance, Errors, Hereſies, Superſtitions and Idolatry ; and are now groaning under the *Mahometan* Oppreſſions.

In other Parts of *Aſia*, where the Goſpel has been preached, and Churches planted in the Days of the *Apoſtles*, they have loſt the chriſtian Religion. Yea, the chriſtian Name among ſome of 'em, is not now to be found. Thus Darkneſs covers that

that Part of the Earth, and groſs Darkneſs the People.

And now let us go into ſome other Quarters of the World, as the Jews were ordered to *Shiloh*; and ſee what an angry God has done there, for the Wickedneſs of his People.

Time was, when there were thouſands of glorious Churches in *Africa*, and many bright and ſhining Stars; among whom, *Auſtin* the renowned Biſhop of *Hippo*, muſt be accounted one of the firſt Magnitude; but now, the Shadow of Death ſtretches it ſelf over thoſe once happy Regions of Light, and not a Church or Miniſter to be ſeen there.

Look we now into *Europe*, and here in *Rome* it ſelf, there was a Church *beloved of God, called to be Saints*, whoſe *Faith was ſpoken of throughout the whole World*, Rom i. 7. But her Name is now, *THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH*, Rev. xvii. 5. Since the glorious *Reformation* begun in theſe latter Ages of the World, there have been famous Churches in the Kingdom of *Poland* and *Tranſylvania*; but *Socinianiſm* made a Gap for *Popery*, and by theſe they were ruined. To paſs by the Deſolations that have come upon the numerous chriſtian Churches that have been in *Bohemia*, *Hungaria*, and in the Valleys of *Piemont*; let us come to *France*. "The Time was, (as we are informed †) "when the reformed could there count two "thouſand one hundred and fifty Churches; "in moſt of theſe two Miniſters, in ſome five;

† Vid. Judge *Dudley*'s Introduction to his Eſſay on the *Merchandize of Slaves and Souls of Men*. Page 2.

" the Church of *Orleans* had ſeven thouſand Com-
" municants ; but their Bodies now lie dead in the
" Street of the great City, &c. *Rev.* xi. 7, 8. In
" the Year 1686, not a ſingle Church left, or a
" reformed Miniſter, to be ſeen in all that King-
" dom. A Divine of great Judgment and emi-
nent Piety, obſerves, " That the Error of Juſtifi-
" cation by Works brings Judgments from God
" upon a People, that give it any Countenance,
" and forſake the Truth. This (ſays he) is ve-
" rified in the *French* Churches ; they receded
" from the firſt Reformers in the Doctrine of Juſ-
" tification ; this is what the moſt guilty of 'em
" will deny, but it was ſo evident, that the *Papiſt*
" took Notice of it. ----- The *French Proteſtants*
" did not zealouſly ſtick to the Doctrine of Juſti-
" fication by Faith in the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt,
" as it was tranſmitted and conveyed down to
" them, by our Reformers ; and what followed ?
" A Decay of Piety, and a Corruption of Man-
" ners, which provoked God to ſcatter and caſt
" them off ‡.

Thus we ſee how it has fared with ſome other Churches. Now, like Errors and Sins, if perſiſted in, and not repented of, will procure like confounding and unchurching Diſpenſations towards other Churches, that yet thro' Grace enjoy their Church-State.

Having thus finiſhed the Doctrines laid down, I now proceed to the

APPLICATION.

USE, I. *Is it as we have heard, that Churches have many Times been guilty of great Apoſtacies from*

‡ See Mr. *Richard Taylor*'s Scripture-Doctrine of Juſtification.

God ?

God? Hence the *Churches* and *profeſſing People* of this Land, would do well from the Conſideration of this ſad Truth, to look into the State of Religion among themſelves, and ſtrictly to examine whether they are not in a declining Condition. Theſe Churches, that have been famous for their *Doctrine*, *Worſhip*, *Diſcipline* and *Manners*, are they yet ſo? Or have we not by Degrees, turned into the degenerate Plant of a ſtrange Vine unto God? Have we not loſt much of our firſt Love, and of our primitive Purity, Piety and holy Strictneſs? If we compare our ſelves with our pious *Anceſtors*, ſhall we not find ourſelves as much ſunk below them, in point of true Worth and Excellency, as *Rehoboam*'s braſen Shields were below *Solomon*'s golden ones? Are we not departing from *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*; and which was once cloſely embraced, and highly prized, by theſe Churches? And is not *Ignorance* of God, and the Things of God, with *Errors*, the *Arminian* eſpecially, apace coming in among us? What a holy Heat, what a flaming Love, was found in the Hearts of the primitive Chriſtians of this Land, to the Houſe and Ordinances of God? And how careful and diligent were they, in attending the publick Aſſemblies of God's People, on Lecture Days, as well as on the Lord's Days? But alas! Is not the Love of many in this Regard waxen cold? And is it not the Manner of many, to neglect the aſſembling of themſelves together? How ſtrict were they in keeping of Sabbaths, not ſpeaking their own Words? But is not the Reſt of the Sabbath now ſadly diſturbed? Don't many take a mighty Liberty in their Diſcourſe on the Lord's Day? Don't they diſcourſe almoſt of any thing that they diſcourſe of on other Days? How careful were our dear Progenitors to offer up the morning and evening Sacrifice in their Families,

Families, and of Reading the holy Scriptures to 'em, and inſtructing them from orthodox Catechiſms? But is not Family-Worſhip and Inſtruction fallen under great Decays among us, their degenerate Offſpring? And if we are ſo defective as to publick and private Worſhip, can we rationally think that ſecret Worſhip is better attended? The firſt Planters of this Land, and Members of theſe Churches, were Men eminent for vital, practical Religion: 'Twas God in his Ordinances, that they thirſted and panted after: The Power of Godlineſs then went with the Form of it. But is not our Religion, in a great degree degenerated into Rituality? Is it not in a great Meaſure external, void of Life, Spirit and Power? *Joſhua*'s Reſolution was the Reſolution of our pious Anceſtors, *As for me and my Houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.* Great was their Care to maintain a wiſe and good Government over their Children and Servants: 'Twas their ſtudy, that their Families might be well ordered Families. But is not Family-Government now almoſt loſt & gone? Time was when Diſcipline in theſe Churches, was upheld in the Power of it; and upon this account, they were *beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jeruſalem, terrible as an Army with Banners.* But alas! How is it fallen now, and how remiſs are we grown? The Lives and Morals of our Fathers were ſuch, as became the Goſpel. They were a humble, loving, peaceable, induſtrious, chaſt, temperate, ſober People; greatly mortified to the World, willing that their Neighbours ſhould thrive, as well as themſelves, true in their Words, faithful in their Promiſes, punctual in their Performances, honeſt & juſt in their Dealings &c. One * that liv'd in this Country, in the beginning

* Mr. *Firmin.*

of

of our Times, for ſeven Years together, was able in the hearing of as an *auguſt Aſſembly* as perhaps has been known in the World †, to give this Teſtimony of them, " That he never ſaw a Beggar, nor " a Man overcome with ſtrong Drink, nor did he " ever hear a profane Oath among them." But don't immoral Practices greatly abound among us? and are they not a grievous blot and ſtain to our Profeſſion?

Thus by inquiring into the State of Religion among us now, and comparing it with what it has been, we learn our own woful Defections; and what reaſon we have to ſay with the lamenting Church, Lam. iv. 1. *How is the Gold become Dim! How is the moſt fine Gold changed!*

2. *Let us now be Exhorted to repent, and do our firſt Works.*

And here,

1. *Let us ſincerely repent of our Declenſions and Apoſtacies from God.* From a deep Senſe, how injurious our Sins have been to a glorious God, and the great Diſhonour they have done to his ſacred Name; let us bitterly lament them. And have our Miſcarriages wounded the Soul of our Saviour, and broke his Heart? O let the Thoughts hereof, wound and break our Souls within us. And let us grieve at the Heart, for our Sins and Backſlidings; becauſe thereby we have grieved the Holy Spirit of God. Let us confeſs our Sins to God, with all the aggravating Circumſtances of them; as being committed againſt ſo much Light, Love, Means, Profeſſions, Confeſſions and Covenant-Engagemens:

† The Houſe of Lords and Commons, with the Aſſembly of Divines at *Weſtminſter.*

and

and let us take the Shame and Blame of them to our ſelves. Let us *lie down in our Shame, and Confuſion let it cover us; becauſe we have ſinned againſt the Lord.* Let us remember *our evil Ways and Doings, which have not been good; and loath our ſelves in our own Sight for our Iniquities, and our Abominations.* And let us *ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well.*

But this brings me to the ſecond Particular,

2. *Let us do our firſt Works.* And here,

1. *Let us acquaint our ſelves with the Chriſtian Doctrines, and be eſtabliſhed therein.* We ſhould with diligence and faithfulneſs improve the Advantages we have, to grow up to ſome Maturity herein. Let us have our Senſes exerciſed, to diſcern both Truth and Error, reaching on to the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of Chriſt, in Knowlege. Eſpecially, let us labour for a clear, thorough Acquaintance with the more momentous and important Truths of the Goſpel. And let us be well grounded in theſe, and not let them ſlip. Every Truth is to be preſerved, but eſpecially the more weighty and neceſſary. And we had need give the more earneſt heed, becauſe our Lot is fallen in a Day of abounding Errors, when the precious Doctrines, wherein are the vitals of Chriſtianity, are denied, yea, ridicul'd and derided.

A very worthy *Divine* of the *Engliſh Nation*, in the Account which he gives of the State of Religion, among Engliſh Proteſtant Diſſenters; tells us, "That as to the Doctrines contained in the Scrip- "ture, they are almoſt ſtruck out of the Liſt of "Articles of Faith. Error may truly be ſaid to "come in like a Flood, and to ſpread it ſelf like a "raging Torrent; we may cry out, The Floods "have lifted up their Waves. Moſt of the per-

"nicious

" nicious Errors which have formerly been bro't
" into the Church, are eagerly embraced in our
" unhappy Times; the Enemies have for ſome
" Years, been endeavouring to rob Chriſt and the
" Holy Spirit of the glory of their ſupreme Divi-
" nity, and to reduce them to the rank of Crea-
" tures; and now Men grow bolder in Error, they
" are forward to deny their Perſonality, and to
" make them only Attributes, Powers, and Names
" of the Father. God's Election of his People to
" Glory, is arraigned as unreaſonable, and his So-
" vereignty is, in the moſt ſaucy Manner oppoſed:
" The Fall of Man is intirely forgot, and his ori-
" ginal Corruption is eagerly denied: The Satis-
" faction of Chriſt is blaſphemed and exploded,
" and his Death is ſaid to be what muſt, accord-
" ing to the neceſſity of Nature, have fallen out:
" Juſtification by his Righteouſneſs, is a Point pur-
" ſued with Rancour and Malice; and Sincerity,
" tho' in an Error, is given out to be a ſufficient
" Title to God's Favour: Preaching Chriſt in his
" Perſon, Offices, and in the Merit of his Death,
" undergoes the Perſecution of cruel Mockings,
" and is ſpoken of by brain-ſick Novices only with
" a Snear: The efficacious Grace of the Holy Spi-
" rit, and his ſanctifying and comforting Influen-
" ces, are rudely blaſphemed as Enthuſiaſm; and
" the Power of Man to convert himſelf, and to
" anſwer all the Ends of his living in the World,
" is eagerly contended for: --- The Perſeverance
" of the Saints in Holineſs, is profanely bantered:
" The ſtupid and brutiſh Notion of the Soul's ſleep-
" ing after Death, is by ſome hotly maintained, and
" its Immateriality & Immortality exploded by o-
" thers. The Reſurrection of the ſame Body, is re-
" preſented as impoſſible; and a general Judgment,
" nay, a particular Time of Men's appearing be-

" fore God to give an Account of what they have
" done in the Body, is now a Subject of ridicule;
" and the Doctrine of the Wicked being reserved
" for eternal Torments, is, by many, set by. †

And is this the doleful State of Religion, as to Matters of Belief among Protestant Dissenters at Home? Then let us look to it, that it be not our Condition here. The same *reverend Person* tells us, that Matters are not better with them with respect to Practice, than they are with respect to Faith. And if we with them, let go the Principles of Religion, with them also, shall we forego the Practice of it. If we grow as corrupt in our Doctrines as they; we shall grow as corrupt in our Lives and Conversations. If we make Shipwreck of Faith, so we shall of a good Conscience. Let us then, be upon our Guard: Let us heedfully watch against all Temptations of one kind and of another, to draw us off from the Truth.

And let us especially see to this, that our Knowlege of divine Truths, be spiritual and saving. A literal and doctrinal Knowlege of divine Truths, is no Security against Apostacy from them. He that only has the Truths of the Gospel floating on the surface of his Brains, may hold 'em to Day, and renounce them to Morrow. But a saving Knowlege of Gospel-Truths, is a good security against Temptations, opposition or seduction from the Truth. Prov. xxiv. 5. *A wise Man is strong, yea, a Man of Knowledge increaseth Strength.* When Men come to see the Truths of the Gospel, in their spiritual Nature and Glory; when they are convinced of the

† See the Defence of some important Doctrines of the Gospel, in Twenty-six Sermons; most of which were preach'd in *Lime Street* by several Ministers, in two Volumes. Particularly, Mr. *Abraham Taylor*'s Sermon on *Rev.* iii 1,2,3. Intitled, *A humble and impartial Inquiry into the Causes of the Decay of practical Religion.*

The

Truth of them, and experience the Power and Efficacy of them upon their own Souls; they will not eaſily and readily let them go. "NoMan (as a great Divine * well expreſſes it) who forſakes the Truth, ever ſaw the Glory of it, or had experience of it's Power."

2. As to the *Worſhip of God.*

(1.) *Let it be our great concern to preſerve and maintain it, in it's Purity.* Let us look upon the Word of God, as a perfect Rule of Worſhip, as well as of Faith; and keep ſeverely to it, in this matter. Admitting nothing, that is contradicted by it, nor detracting any Thing, that is preſcribed therein. Man may vainly think, to make God's Ordinances better, by ſome Additions & Inventions of his own: But let us believe, that's it's better for us, to enjoy them in their native Purity, Simplicity, and Spirituality. A pompous ceremonial Worſhip it's true, is more apt to work upon, and affect the Senſes; but a pure, ſpiritual and divine Worſhip, ſuch as Goſpel Worſhip is, is more adapted to reach the Soul. And then due Care ſhould be taken by theſe Churches, that there Members be, as the Members of the firſt Churches of the Goſpel were, even, *Saints, faithful Brethren, & ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus.* "Such as are ſound and knowing in all the fundamental Doctrines of the chriſtian Religion, without Scandal in their Lives, and to a Judgment regulated by the Word of God, are Perſons of viſible Godlineſs & Honeſty, credibly profeſſing cordial Subjection to Chriſt." Since God is jealous of his Worſhip, ſo let us be.

(2.) *Let us duly attend the Worſhip of God.*

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* Dr. *Owen.*

Secret Prayer, Let it be daily addreſſed to the glorious Hearer of Prayer. This is a Duty which our Lord recommends unto us by his own Example, as well as ſtrictly requires of us. Morning and Evening did he engage in it. Let us imitate our bleſſed Saviour herein, and make a practice of ſecret Prayer to God Morning and Evening, as long as we live. With what Face can we call our ſelves Chriſtians, if we neglect it?

Family-Worſhip, Let that alſo be duly perform'd. Families are furniſhed with many ſpecial Advantages and Opportunities for God's ſolemn Worſhip, which are ſo many Talents, that they ought to improve for God, and in the worſhipping of him. God is the Founder and Inſtitutor of our Families: and ſince they are of him, and thro' him, they ought to be to him. Our Families are the Lord's, for he made them; therefore ſhould they be for his Uſe, imployed in his Service, to his Honour.

And here, *Let us pray to God in our Families.* Heads of Families ſhould pray with them and for them. We are bidden to *pray with all Prayer*, Eph. 6. 18. with Family-Prayer, as well as ſecret and publick. We are taught it, by the Example of holy Men in Scripture. *Abraham* with his Houſhold called on the Name of the Lord. Where-ever he pitched his Tent, there he built an Altar to the Lord. *Gen.* xii. 8, ---- xiii. 4, 18. *Joſhua* ſaid, *As for me and my Houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.* Prayer is ſo neceſſary a part of God's Service, that a Perſon can't be ſaid in general to be devoted to God's Service without it. And of *Cornelius* it is ſaid, *Act.* x. 2. That *he feared God with all his Houſe---and prayed alway.* He worſhipped God with all his Houſe, and maintained a conſtant courſe of Prayer with them. The Jews were won't to Sacrifice to God, every Morning and Evening, *Numb.* xxviii. 3, 4.

Chriſtians

Chriſtians that by Profeſſion are a Royal Prieſthood, ſhould offer the Sacrifice of Family Prayer & Praiſe, every Morning and Evening. When the Apoſtle ſays to Maſters of Families, Col. 4. 2. *Continue in Prayer*; it's probable (ſays One) he alludes to the continual Burnt-Offering, that was offered Morning and Evening. O how reaſonable, how becoming is it, for Families in the Morning, to bleſs God for the Mercies of the Night paſt, and to ask his needful Favours for the enſuing Day. And ſo in the Evening, to bleſs God for the Mercies of the Day paſt, and to ask his Protection & Favour to them, in the enſuing Night. And what Reaſon have thoſe Families, that neglect calling upon God, to fear, that he will *pour out his Fury on them?*

Further, We ſhould teach our Families *the good Knowlege of the Lord.* Deut. xi. 18, 19, 20. *Therefore ſhall ye lay up theſe my Words in your Heart, and in your Soul; and bind them for a Sign upon your Hand, that they may be as Frontlets between your Eyes. And ye ſhall teach them your Children, ſpeaking of them when thou ſitteſt in thine Houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the Way, when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up. And thou ſhalt write them upon the Door-Poſts of thine Houſe, and upon thy Gates.* Eph. vi. 4. *And ye Fathers, bring up your Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.* Parents & Heads of Families, ſhould read the Scriptures to their Families, in a ſerious and ſolemn Manner. And they ſhould Catechiſe their Children and Servants, obliging them to learn their Catechiſm by Heart, and to keep it in remembrance: And ſhould endeavour to help them to underſtand it, as they become capable. Both Parents would do well to engage in a diligent Inſtructing their Children. *Solomon*'s Father was his Tutor, *Prov.* iv. 3, 4. And he never forgot the Leſſons, his Mother taught him, *Prov.* xxxi. 1.

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Yet again, we that are Parents, ſhould not content our ſelves, with a bear teaching our Children, the great Truths of our holy Religion; but ſhould labour in it, that thoſe Truths may be ſavingly impreſs'd upon their Hearts betimes. Wherefore we ſhould ſolemnly command & charge our Children to ſerve the Lord: Yea, ſeriouſly Expoſtulate with 'em about it. *David* charges his Son *Solomon, Know thou the God of thy Father, & ſerve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind.* And his excellent Mother expoſtulates with him, Prov. xxxi. 2, 3, 4, 5. *What my Son? and what the Son of my Womb? and what the Son of my Vows?* &c.

Once more, *Let the publick Worſhip be carefully attended by us.* The Charge is, *not to forſake the aſſembling of our ſelves together*, Heb. x. 28. Chriſt was zealous for the publick Worſhip of God, John ii. 17. *The Zeal of thine Houſe hath eaten me up.* As Chriſt was, ſo let us be, zealous for the publick Worſhip of God. It's what glorifies God moſt; it's what he accepts beſt. *The Lord loveth the Gates of Zion, more than all the Dwellings of Jacob.* Let us then give diligent Attendance at his Houſe; Opportunities to hear the Word of God there, and to enjoy his Ordinances on our own Days, ſhould be embraced by us; but eſpecially ſhould we frequent the Aſſemblies of God's People on the Lord's Days, and not ſuffer ſmall Matters to keep us from them. And let us make Conſcience of attending both the morning and evening Sacrifices of the Lord's Day; and not content our ſelves with coming to the publick Worſhip on one part of the Day, and ſtaying away the other, as the Manner of too many is. And let us be adviſed *to come ſeaſonably.* Many wrong their own Souls in not ſo doing. There is no Part of God's Worſhip, but it concerns every one, and every one may receive Benefit by it, if it be not their own Fault. And then they wrong the

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Congregation. People's coming late, gives Occaſion of drawing away the Minds of others from the Worſhip of God, (as has been already obſerved) and ſo hinders their Profit and Advantage.

And now to ſhut up this Head,

(3.) and laſtly, *Let us guard againſt Formality in the Worſhip of God, and approve our ſelves ſuch Worſhipers, as he is ſeeking for, who worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth.* Let us not put off God with external Obſervances, and with bodily Reverence and Attendance; this we muſt give him; but we muſt principally regard, that our Service of him, be a ſpiritual Service. We muſt ſee to it, that all Acts of outward Worſhip to God, be performed with a pure and ſincere Mind. Whatever we do in the Service of God, let us *do it heartily as to the Lord*, with Underſtanding, feeling and true Devotion of Soul.

3. *Let us be careful to maintain and uphold Government and Diſcipline.*

Particularly,

(1.) *In our Families.* Every chriſtian Family ſhould be *a Church in the Houſe.* 2 *Cor.* xvi. 19. *Col.* iv. 15. In which, as the Maſter ſhould be a *teaching Prophet*, and (a ſacrificing) *praying Prieſt*; ſo likewiſe a *ruling King*, keeping up Family-Government and Diſcipline therein. Heads of Families ſhould *rule well their own Houſes*, 1 Tim. iii. 4. ſhould maintain a wiſe Government over their Children and Servants; ſo carry it, that they may both love them and fear them. They ſhould countenance and encourage every thing, that is good and laudable in their Children and Servants; and on the other hand, diſcountenance every thing that is Evil in them. We muſt uſe our Authority to prevent Sin, to ſuppreſs it, in our Families. We muſt reſtrain our Children from Sin, as much as is poſſible. The

Neglect

Neglect of this brought ſore Judgments on *Eli*'s Houſe, 1 *Sam.* iii. 13. We muſt indeed be careful not to *provoke our Children to Wrath, leſt they be diſcouraged*; and as to our Servants, we muſt forbear Threatning; yet we muſt alſo with holy Zeal and Reſolution, and the Meekneſs of Wiſdom, keep good Order in our Families, and *ſet no wicked Thing before our Eyes*, but witneſs againſt it, reprove it, yea, if need be, correct for it, *Prov.* xiii. 24. & xxiii. 13, 14.

2. *Let us look to it, that the Government of Chriſt in his Church, be duly upheld and exerciſed among us.* Chriſt the King of the Church, has in his governing Wiſdom, appointed a ſutable Government to be upheld therein. This Government is ſpiritual, in Contradiſtinction to that which is civil & worldly. And as the one is abſolutely neceſſary to the well-being of the State; ſo the other, is as abſolutely neceſſary to the Well-being of the Church. Where Church-Diſcipline and Government is not ſupported and practiſed, Confuſion and every evil Thing is like to follow. *Know ye not that a little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump? Purge out therefore the old Leaven*, 1 Cor. v. 6, 7. "When Apoſtacy prevailed "in the aſiatick Churches, there (we are told) was "the original Wound. They did not brandiſh the "Sword of Diſcipline, which is Chriſt's own Ex"pedient, for the Preſervation of Churches in Pu"rity; yea, this was the fatal Neglect, which by "Degrees prov'd ruinous to theſe once famous and "glorious Churches. Some learned Men have "obſerved, that the Neglect of Diſcipline in the "Churches of *Aſia*, brought in Corruption of Man"ners, and the Corruption of Manners (through "the juſt revenging Hand of God) was attend"ed with Corruption of Doctrine; and theſe to"gether provoked the Lord, to lay theſe Churches

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"most deſolate †. So it was with the once famous Churches of *Bohemia*, remiſsneſs in their Diſcipline prov'd their Ruin. Diſcipline is Chriſt's Ordinance, both for the Prevention of Apoſtacy in Churches, and to recover them when collapſed. Let us carefully heed this Matter. Let us then *not bear with them that are Evil*, Rev. ii. 2. Let us *look diligently, leſt any Man fail of the Grace of God, leſt any Root of Bitterneſs ſpringing up, trouble us, and many be defiled*, Heb. xii. 15. Sin is of an infectious and contagious Nature; and if there be not a Separation made between the Clean and the Unclean, (I mean ſuch as are viſibly ſo) it will have a fatal Tendency. It is a celebrated Saying, and a true one; That Church-Diſcipline, is the Throne in which Chriſt reigns. Now we muſt keep Chriſt upon the Thorne, by keeping up the Power of Diſcipline, would we have a Reign of Righteouſneſs and Holineſs among us.

4. *We muſt live a Life of Holineſs, and new Obedience.* We muſt *follow Holineſs.* We muſt *ſerve the Lord without Fear, in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs before him, all the Days of our Life. As he that hath called us is holy, ſo muſt we be holy in all Manner of Converſation. Whatſoever Things are true, whatſoever Things are honeſt, whatſover Things are juſt, whatſoever Things are pure, whatſoever Things are lovely, whatſover Things are of good Report; if there be any Vertue, and if there be any Praiſe, let us think on thoſe Things.* We muſt *live as the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation teaches us*; even *ſoberly, righteouſly and godly, in this preſent World.*

† Dr. *Increaſe Mather's* Call to the riſing Geeneration. P. 51.

Particularly, We muſt live ſoberly *with Reſpect to our ſelves.* We muſt not *think of our ſelves more highly than we ought to think, but muſt think ſoberly,* and muſt be humble. We muſt *not love the World, neither the Things of the World*; but ſuppreſs all extravagant Deſires after the Profits, Pleaſures and Honours of it. We muſt be meek, and we muſt be temperate; and *walk honeſtly as in the Day, not in rioting and Drunkenneſs.* We muſt be chaſte, and keep our Body, as a Thing conſecrated to God, from all Impurity. A Sobriety in Speech, in Behaviour, in Apparel, in Recreations; muſt be obſerved by us.

Again, We muſt *live righteouſly, towards all Men*; rendring to all their Dues; *Tribute to whom Tribute is due; Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom, Fear to whom Fear, & Honour to whom Honour is due*; and we muſt *owe no Man any Thing but Love*; that is a Debt, which we ſhould be continually paying, by all ſuitable Expreſſions of Affection and Tenderneſs, to all we have to do withal. We muſt abound in Love to all Men, and exerciſe Lovingkindneſs in the Earth towards all. We muſt be benign, kind, merciful, charitable, uſeful, helpful unto all Men. And be ready to do our utmoſt to redreſs thoſe Miſeries, whether ſpiritual or temporal, which our Fellow-Creatures, and Fellow-Chriſtians may be labouring under. We muſt be juſt and righteous in our Dealings, Traffick and Commerce, with one another; governing our ſelves herein, by that Rule of univerſal Equity laid down by our Saviour; *Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them*, Mat. vii. 12. We muſt *ſpeak the Truth to our Neighbour*; for this is his Due. We muſt be faithful in our Promiſes, peaceable in the Societies to which we belong. And if at any Time we are injured, we muſt not maintain any Grudges againſt thoſe that have

have wronged us; but readily forgive them, as God (we hope) for Chriſt's ſake will forgive us. To conclude, we muſt faithfully fill up all our Places and Relations, in which the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God hath ſet us, with ſutable preſcribed Duty.

Laſtly, We muſt *live godly towards God.* Our Regards to him, muſt run thro' all. 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether ye Eat or Drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* Perſonal and relative Duties muſt be done in obedience to his Commands, with Aims at the pleaſing, gratifying and glorifying of him; from Principles of holy Love and Fear of him. But there is an expreſs and direct Duty alſo, that we owe to God, and which we ſhould be careful to pay him; our Choice ſhould be of him, as the Portion of our Souls; our Minds ſhould be upon him; our Deſires fervent and affectionate after him; our Delight in him; and we muſt fear him, truſt in him, and depend upon him: and worſhip him in and by thoſe Ways and Means, which he hath appointed in his Word; but of theſe I have ſpoken under a former Head. Let me add here, we muſt be very careful to ſanctify the Lord's Day, and keep it holy, not only by a ſtrict Attendance on the publick Worſhip of God in his Houſe; but alſo by a faithful diſcharge of private Duties in our own Houſes. Such as Prayer, Reading, Mediation &c. not doing our own Ways, not finding our own Pleaſure, not ſpeaking our own Words, on God's holy Day.

And now by way of Motive,

1. *Let us call to mind the ſecond Doctrine, and what was ſaid under the ſame; and be thereby excited to our Duty.* We there heard, that if declining Churches *do remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their firſt Works*; that then the Lord Jeſus

Chriſt will continue their Church-State to them, and will not take his Kingdom from them. And if we ſo do, he will deal thus graciouſly with us. If we return to him, he will aſſuredly return to us; pardon and accept us, eſtabliſh and bleſs us. *Zech.* 1. 3. The Lord will then create upon our Churches as it were *a Cloud and Smoak by Day, and the ſhining of a flame of Fire by Night*; and on all the *Glory create a Defence.* As Birds flying, ſo will the Lord of Hoſts defend us, defending alſo he will deliver us, and paſſing over, he will preſerve us. The Lord will be unto us a *Wall of Fire round about, and will be the Glory in the midſt of us.* With joyful Souls may we now ſing, as in Iſai. xxvi. 1. *We have a ſtrong City, Salvation will God appoint for Walls and Bulwarks.* He will not ſuffer the Boar out of the Wood to waſte his Vineyard, nor the Wild Beaſt of the Field to devour it; nor ſhall the Foxes, the little Foxes, be permitted to ſpoil the Vines.

He will ſhed down his benign Influences upon us; and we ſhall *grow as the Vine*, and our *Beauty ſhall be as the Olive Tree.* We ſhall *caſt forth our Roots as Lebanon, and ſpread abroad our Branches.* The Lord now will be our *Shepherd, and we ſhall not want.* He will make us to *lie down in green Paſtures*; he will *lead us beſide the ſtill Waters. In this Mountain, will the Lord of Hoſts make unto us a Feaſt of fat Things, a Feaſt of Wines on the Lees, of fat Things full of Marrow, of Wines on the Lees well refined.* He will abundantly bleſs the Proviſion of Zion, endue the Miniſters of the Goſpel with Righteouſneſs, and render the Ordinances of the Sanctuary effectual, thro' a divine Power accompanying of them; to the Converſion of Sinners, and the Edification of Saints. We ſhall be filled with Light, Life, and Love; we ſhall enjoy a ſweet Communion with Chriſt here; and at laſt, paſs to a ſweeter in the heavenly World,

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even to an immediate, full, uninterrupted & everlasting Communion with Chriſt. *The Lord will give us Grace and Glory, and no good Thing will he withhold from us, if we walk uprightly* with him.

In recovering, and maintaining the Intereſt of Religion among us, we ſhall lay a Foundation for temporal, as well as ſpirital and eternal Bleſſings. Beſides the natural tendency which our excellent Religion has to promote the outward Good and Proſperity of a People; it has a moral, federal tendency to do it. See *Deut.* 28. from *ver.* 1, *to* 13. So *Deut.* 29. 9. *Keep therefore the Words of this Covenant, and do them, that ye may proſper in all that ye do.* Iſai. 1. 19. *If ye be willing and obedient, ye ſhall eat the good of the Land.* Hoſ. 2. 21, 22. *And it ſhall come to paſs in that Day* (the Day of God's betrothing his People unto himſelf) *I will hear, ſaith the Lord, I will hear the Heavens, & they ſhall hear the Earth, and the Earth ſhall hear the Corn, and the Wine, and the Oyl, and they ſhall hear Jezreel.* To cloſe this Head, if we will incline our Hearts unto the Lord our God, to walk in all his Ways, and to keep his Commandments, and his Statutes, and his Judgments, which he commanded our Fathers; then he will be with us, as he was with our Fathers: neither will he leave us, nor forſake us. But,

2. Let us conſider, *that unleſs we do repent of our Sins, and return to God and our Duty; we ſhall provoke the Lord Jeſus, the Head and King of the Church, to remove our Candleſtick out of its Place.* Thus has he dealt with other Churches, for their Sins and Apoſtacies from him, as was ſhown under the third Doctrine: And thus may we juſtly fear, he will deal with us, if like them, we perſiſt in our Sins and Rebellions againſt him. Our increaſing Declenſions, will increaſe God's Anger againſt us, and we may juſtly expect, that at laſt, they will end in unchurching

ing Diſpenſations. And Oh! How lamentable will our Caſe be, if it come to this! If the Goſpel be one of the greateſt Bleſſings, God can bleſs a People withal; then the removal of it, muſt be accounted one of the ſoreſt Judgments that can befall them. Of the three ſore Judgments of God, Famine, Sword and Peſtilence; Famine ſeems to be the heavieſt. *David* choſe the Peſtilence, before the Sword and Famine, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 14. And the Prophet tells us, in Lam. iv. 9, 10. *They that be ſlain with the Sword, are better than they that be ſlain with Hunger: for theſe pine away, ſtricken through for want of the Fruits of the Field. The Hands of the pitiful Women have ſodden their own Children, they were their Meat in the Deſtruction of the Daughter of my People.* And yet a Famine of Bread, or a Thirſt of Water, is not ſo terrible, as a Famine of Hearing the Word of the Lord. The one is bodily, the other is ſpiritual; a Soul-Famine, and of all Evils, Soul-Evils are the worſt. Bodily Famine can but kill the Body: But this ſpiritual Famine, holds the Sinner under ſpiritual Death, and will bring him under the Power of eternal Death. We are told, Prov. xxix. 18. *Where there is no Viſion, the People periſh.* When the Goſpel comes to be removed from a People, thick Darkneſs comes upon 'em; they ſit in Darkneſs, and in the Shadow of Death. Such are Children of Darkneſs, and are in the Way that leads down to the Blackneſs of Darkneſs for ever. The Way to the internal Call, is by the external; and when this is not vouchſafed, it is a ſad Evidence, that the other is denied. Rom. x. 14. *How ſhall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how ſhall they hear without a Preacher?* As much as to ſay, they cannot. Where the Light of the Goſpel ſhines not, there is no Illumination, Converſion, Edification

tion or Salvation to be expected †. How ſad then muſt the State of ſuch a People be!

In a Word, When the Goſpel goes from a People, all outward Peace and Proſperity will go along with it. It never comes, but with a full Bleſſing; and it never departs, but it leaves a full Curſe behind it. 2 Chron. xv. 3, 5, 6. *Now for a long Seaſon, Iſrael had been without the true God, and without a teaching Prieſt, & without Law. And in thoſe Times there was no Peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in: But great Vexations were upon all the Inhabitants of the Countrys. And Nation was deſtroyed of Nation, and City of City: for God did vex them with all Adverſity.* A univerſal Scourge, and all Manner of Troubles were diſquieting of 'em. While the Goſpel ſtays with a People, and is prized, and embraced, and obeyed by 'em; all will continue with them: But when this is gone, our other Enjoyments will not laſt. In a Word, A People in loſing the Goſpel, loſe their God, and what a Loſs is this! Hoſ. ix. 12. *Wo unto them, when I depart from them.* And, wo, wo, wo, unto us if God, and the Goſpel depart from us; we ſhall be in a moſt woful State, if it once come to this. Nothing

† The Knowledge of Chriſt is none of Nature's Principles: The Book of the Creatures is no Means alone, much leſs a ſufficient Means to teach the Knowledge of Chriſt. It may diſcover Mercy, but gives not the leaſt hint of the way of Mercy: It ſpeaks nothing of God Incarnate; of the two Natures in one Perſon; of Jeſus the Son of *Mary*; of Chriſt's Suretiſhip, and Suffering for us, riſing, aſcending, mediating, returning; of the two Covenants, and their ſeveral Conditions, and the Rewards of keeping them, and Penalty of breaking them, &c. It's utterly ſilent in theſe Things. And to affirm that the Spirit calls or reacheth Men where the Word is not, and where the Creature or Nature ſpeaks not, is, I think, a groundleſs Fiction. *Baxter's Saints Everlaſting Reſt.* Page 128.

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can be expected then, but all Manner of Miſeries, temporal ſpiritual and eternal, Jer. xxiii. 33. *When this People ſhall ask thee, ſaying, What is the Burden of the Lord? Thou ſhalt ſay unto them, What Burden? I will even forſake you.* Awful Burden indeed, that will ſink us into a bottomleſs Abyſs of Calamities. Let us then ſeriouſly lay theſe Things to Heart, and let us be perſwaded, to reform thoſe Things that are amiſs among us, and do the firſt Works.

By Way of Direction,

1. *Let us cry to God, for his Spirit and the Influences thereof, to enable us to comply with our Duty. Without me,* ſays Chriſt, *ye can do nothing,* John xv. 5. We ſhall never repent, unleſs the Lord Jeſus, who is exalted at God's right hand, give Repentance unto us. Nor ſhall we do our firſt Works, unleſs God by his Holy Spirit, work in us, both to will and to do, of his own good Pleaſure. If God by his Spirit, will revive us, and raiſe us up; we ſhall live in his Sight. If he will pour out his Spirit from on high upon us, our Wilderneſs ſhall become a fruitful Field; and there is nothing ſhort of this will do it. Since then, there is ſuch a Neceſſity of the almighty Power of the Spirit of God, to effect a real and thorough Work of Reformation among us; let us earneſtly ſeek to God by Prayer, to pour him out upon us for that End: Such Prayers are pleaſing to God, ſince what is prayed for tends ſo directly to his Glory, and the good of Men's Souls; And they are a very notable Means to obtain the Holy Spirit from God. Luke xi. 9. *Ask, and it ſhall be given.* What ſhall be given? Even, *the Holy Spirit to them that ask him,* Ver. 13. Well then, Let us knock hard at Heaven-Gates. Let us wreſtle with God for ſo invaluable a Mercy, and take no Denial. Let us

cry

cry mightily to Heaven, that he would return and leave a Bleſſing behind him. Let us beg with the Prophet *Habakkuk*, Chap. iii. 2. *O Lord, revive thy Work in the midſt of the Years, in the midſt of the Years make known: in Wrath remember Mercy.* Let us pray with *Moſes* the Man of God, as in Pſalm xc. 16, 17. *Let thy Work appear unto thy Servants; and thy Glory unto their Children. And let the Beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and eſtabliſh thou the Work of our Hands upon us: yea, the Work of our Hands eſtabliſh thou it.* The Out-pouring of the Spirit of God for the reviving of Religion among us, is a Matter of the laſt Importance; and therefore ſhould we pray for the ſame, with all Manner of Prayer, ſecret, private and publick; in Sincerity, Humility, Faith and Fervency.

Bleſſed be God, that there has been ſuch a Spirit of Prayer, for ſpiritual Bleſſings, awakened among his People of late Years. Let us continue herein, and not faint. And let us be encouraged to perſeverance in Prayer, from what God has wrought in ſome Parts of this Land. I mean more eſpecially, *the County of Hampſhire.* His People there, have had a marvellous Viſit from the Lord of Hoſts, and the Man of his right hand. He has revived Religion marvellouſly among them, by pouring out his Spirit upon them. As God is to be praiſed for that wonderful Work ‡, and as we are to rejoyce in all that great Good-

‡ See an Account of it in a Letter of the Rev. Mr. *Edwards* of *Northampton*, annexed to a uſeful and excellent Book of the Rev. Mr. *Williams* of *Hatfield*, intitled, *The Duty and Intereſt of a People among whom Religion has been planted, to continue ſtedfaſt and ſincere in the Profeſſion and Practice of it, from Generation to Generation. With Directions for ſuch as are concerned to obtain a true Repentance and Converſion to God.* —— Preached at a Time of general Awakenings.

neſs beſtowed upon them, and to be thankful for it; (if one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoyce with it) ſo ſhould we thereby be moved, earneſtly to pray, that the Work may become more general and univerſal. Since God ſeems to be on the giving Hand, let us with Importunity ask of him, that the whole Land may partake of the like bleſſed Effuſions of the Holy Spirit.

2. *Let us be directed to uſe what Means and Methods we can to promote Religion, and a Work of Reformation.* It is true, nothing ſhort of the Spirit of God, will effect a thorough Reformation; and therefore ſhould we ſo earneſtly & inceſſantly ſeek him by Prayer. But if our endeavours in the ſeveral Places and Stations, which God hath ſet us in, are wanting; we have little Reaſon to expect that God will hear us. It is in the Uſe of Means, that God is wont to grant his efficacious Grace and Spirit. Wherefore then, let us lay out our ſelves to the utmoſt in puſhing forward this bleſſed Work.

Private Chriſtians ſhould exhort one another daily, leaſt they be hardened through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin. Such ſhould edify one another in Love. They ſhould quicken one another to Duty. When the Lord had propheſied, *Iſai.* ii. 2. that under the Goſpel all Nations ſhould flow unto the Houſe of the Lord, he adds, Ver. 3. *And many People ſhall go & ſay, Come ye, and let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the Houſe of the God of Jacob.* Such ſhould be their Zeal, that they ſhould not only go themſelves; but perſwade and preſs others, to go with them. So let Chriſtians do now, call upon their Neighbours, and draw them to the Aſſemblies of religious Worſhip, when they are backward in giving their Attendance there. Let Chriſtians urge and excite one another to Duty, in one Inſtance of it, and another. By good Counſel, Reproof,

Reproof, Inſtruction, Example; let them build up one another in the moſt holy Faith.

But there are *two* Orders of Men that I would particularly addreſs here, and beſeech to do what in them lies, that dying, languiſhing Religion may be revived among us. They are our *civil Rulers*, and the *Miniſters of the Goſpel*.

1. *Let me addreſs our honourable civil Rulers*, and with a becoming Humility intreat them, to make the Intereſt of Religion among us their chief Concern. You are under the moſt ſolemn Bonds and Obligations thus to do. You are *the Miniſters of God for Good unto us*, for this Good, even to promote Religion among us; and you are favoured with ſingular Advantages and Opportunities therefor; O ſee to it, that you improve them! Civil Rulers may do much to prevent Apoſtacy among a profeſſing People. It is remark'd of *Iſrael*, Judges ii. 7. *That they ſerved the Lord all the Days of Joſhua*. And they may do much too, in recovering them from their Apoſtacies. Yea, where do we read, either in ſacred or eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, of any remarkable, general Reformation amongſt a People, without the Help and Aſſiſtance of the Magiſtracy? Would *Judah* of old have reformed, if thoſe pious & excellent Kings, *Aſa*, *Jehoſaphat*, *Hezekiah* and *Joſiah*, had not beſtowed their Care, Zeal and Pains in effecting their Reformation? Would *Luther* at *Germany*, or *Calvin* at *Geneva*, been able to carry on the glorious Work of Reformation to that length, if others of the civil Order had not joined their Endeavours with theirs? Since then, (my Fathers) *the Matter belongs to you*, and under God, has ſo great a Dependance upon you; *ariſe, and be of good Courage*.

Various are the Ways and Means in, and by which, Civil Rulers may ſet forward the Work of Reformation among a People; according to the various Stations, which they hold in the Government. Will you then be perſwaded in the ſeveral Poſts, which God, your King and Country, have placed you in, to be up and doing.

And here, I ſhall begin with thoſe, who are eſpecially concerned in the important Buſineſs of this Day, His Majeſty's Council in being, together with the Repreſentatives of this Province.

Honourable Gentlemen,

You have a ſpecial Opportunity before you to further the religious, as well as civil Intereſts of this People. May God direct and aſſiſt you aright to improve it. Let not ſo much as one of you, give up himſelf to the Conduct of others, to do what they would have you, without examining whether it be right or wrong. Uſe your own Light & Reaſon, which God has given you, in this weighty Affair. It is a mean Thing indeed, to ſerve only as Tools, for others to work by. Will you remember, Sirs, that your Suffrages are not your own. You may not give your Voices to theſe and thoſe, as you pleaſe. Conſider, when you are together, that God ſtandeth in the Congregation of the Mighty; he judgeth among the Gods. And if any of you abuſe your Power in chuſing, which God by the Royal CHARTER has conferred upon you, you muſt account for it another Day. Let all crooked Deſigns and ſiniſter Ends be now laid aſide; and act in the Integrity of your Hearts, as in the Preſence of God, and under his impartial Eye; and be ſure that you chuſe for him. Be not byaſſed by Prejudice, Partiality, Diſaffection, or perſonal Favour in

your

your Choice: But let the known Worth and Fitneſs of Perſons determine you. Such as have a Seat in his Majeſty's Council, have a very great and weighty Truſt repoſed in them; and ſuperior Powers are needful rightly to diſcharge it. Such had need to be Men of excelling, diſtinguiſhing Knowlege and Wiſdom; and in your Choice you muſt have reſpect to theſe Qualifications: but theſe are not all that are neceſſary; in deſigning Men to this high Station, principal Regard muſt be had to Religion, that they be Men of ſincere Piety: And if Perſons are void of this, how eminent ſoever they may be, for their other Accompliſhments, yet by all Means let them be rejected. Among other Things, which the Council is betruſted withal, it muſt be remembred, that they are an eminent Branch of the Legiſlature, and ſo bear a ſpecial Part in framing our Laws: They alſo with the Governour, Conſtitute our Judges and Juſtices; and the Overſight of the College, is in Part committed to them. Chuſe Men then, that having Religion near their Hearts, mourn our Degeneracies, tremble for the Ark of God, and will addreſs themſelves with unfainting Application, for the reviving Religion among us, the regaining and ſecuring the gracious Preſence of God with us. Particularly, Thoſe that will be ready to bring forward ſuch wholſome Laws, as are neceſſary and uſeful to advance Religion; and concern'd to appoint ſuitable Perſons to Execute ſuch Laws; and will take Care of the College, that it anſwer the End which our moſt excellent Predeceſſors and renowned Fore-Fathers had in founding it.

And now, with a thankful Acknowlegement of the many good and excellent Laws, which former Aſſemblies have Enacted to promote Religion among us; I would humbly requeſt of this honourable

able Great and General Aſſembly here preſent, to take Religion into their ſerious Conſideration, and in their Wiſdom meditate, whether ſome other Laws may not be made, that will befriend the Intereſt of it? It is our Life, the one Thing needful; it is our all. You cannot (my Fathers) employ your ſelves about a bigger, or better Thing.

Will you allow me here to ſuggeſt one or two Things.

It is to be feared that Perſons negligence in attending the publick Worſhip of the Sanctuary, is daily growing upon us; can nothing further be done for the Remedy of it?

And does not the Sin of Drunkenneſs dreadfully increaſe among us? Bringing with it, Woes, Miſeries and Miſchiefs of all Sorts. May not ſomething more be done to ſuppreſs ſo great an Evil? The licenſing of unqualified Perſons, to be Innholders and Retailers; and the multiplying Houſes to ſell ſtrong Drink, may juſtly be thought to be the great Cauſes of this deluge of Debauchery, that is flowing in upon us. If Perſons who have little or no Conſcience, come to be Innholders or Retailers, they will allow of vile Diſorders; and will not care how much they corrupt their Neighbours, if they can gain by it themſelves. Such Houſes will prove the Nurſeries of Vice, Diſorder & Irreligion. And the needleſs multiplying of Taverns, & other Houſes of publick Licence among a People, is of pernicious Conſequence unto them. What are they up and down in a Town, but ſo many Traps and Snares to catch and deſtroy the lovers of ſtrong Drink. They are Temptations to ſuch, and the more there are of them, and the nearer they are to them,

them, the more likelihood there is of their being undone by them. Can nothing now be done by the Legiſlature, for the removal of theſe Nuſances? We ask of our honourable Rulers theſe two Things; The one is, that no Perſon be allowed to ſell ſtrong Drink, but what are of approved Sobriety, and good Converſation, Men of Honeſty and good Order. The other is, that Houſes for this Purpoſe, be not needleſly multiplied.

I am ſenſible, that there is a Law, which prohibits any to be Licenſed to ſell ſtrong Drink, but ſuch as are approbated by the Select-Men of a Town. But then it is not enjoyned upon ſuch as are veſted with Power of granting Licences, that all ſuch ſhall be Licenſed. And it is to be hoped, that thoſe that are immediately concerned in that Affair, will not look upon ſuch an Approbation, as a ſafe Rule, always to be relied upon, and to go by.

There is one Thing more which I would recommend to the ſerious Conſideration of this Great and General Court; and that is, Whether there is not a great Duty lying upon us, reſpecting the Tranſactions of the Year 1692, when not only many Perſons were taken off by the Hand of publick Juſtice for the ſuppoſed Crime of Witchcraft; but their Eſtates alſo ruined, and their Families impoveriſhed. None diſpute the Integrity of thoſe, who were then concerned to act and judge moſt in thoſe Matters. But it was a dark Day with them; they walk'd in the Clouds, and could not clearly ſee their way, as to the Myſtery of Iniquity then working. All Orders of Perſons have ſince ſeen Reaſon to condemn the Rules of the whole Proceſs as fallacious and inſufficient to diſtinguiſh the Guilty from the

the Innocent †. What the Senſe even of our Predeceſſors, and thoſe who were then upon the Stage of Action was, in relation to this Affair, may be in ſome meaſure learned from a Proclamation for a General Faſt, emitted *Decemb.* 17. 1696, four Years after; in which is contained this Direction for publick Prayers, *viz.* "That God would ſhew us what "we know not, and help us wherein we have done "amiſs, to do ſo no more: And eſpecially that "whatever Miſtakes on either Hand, have been "fallen into, either by the body of this People, or "any order of Men, referring to the late Tragedy "raiſed by Satan and his Inſtruments, thro' the "awful Judgments of God: He would humble us "therefor, and pardon all the Errors of his Ser-"vants and People, that deſire to love his Name; "and be atoned to his Land.

Now tho' the loſs of Parents cannot be made up to their ſurviving Poſterity, yet their Eſtates may; And the Queſtion is (if it be not beyond all Queſtion) whether a Reſtitution is not due from the Publick to them, and we are not bound in Juſtice to make it. Hereby Infamy may be taken off from the Names and Memory of ſuch as were Executed, and who it may be did not in the leaſt deſerve it; as well as a Reparation made to their Children, for the Injuries done them; who remain to this Day among us in mean, low and abject Circumſtances. It is now ſomething more than forty Years ſince theſe ſad Things were done among us; but length of Time is no Argument that God is not at

† See the Rev. Mr. *Hale's* accurate and judicious Diſcourſe concerning Witchcraft, ſhewing how Perſons guilty of that Crime may be convicted; and in which the Means uſed for their diſcovery are diſcuſſed both negatively and affirmatively, according to Scripture and Experience.

this

this Day, among other Things, contending with us for theſe; ſince he puniſhed *Iſrael* with Famine three Years for a Sin of miſguided Zeal committed forty Years before that, 2 *Sam.* xxi. 1, 2.

I am ſpeaking of the Ways whereby our civil Rulers may promote the Intereſt of Religion among us. And I now proceed to ſay, that another Way, is, by putting the Execution of the Laws made for this Purpoſe, into the Hands of well-accompliſhed, and well-qualified Perſons.

Will his EXCELLENCY then, and the Honourable Board, ſuffer me to intreat them, carefully to heed this. Appoint none to this momentous Buſineſs, but ſuch as are Men of Knowlege, and well acquainted with the Laws; Men of Religion, that will lay out themſelves with Courage and Zeal to execute them. To deſign Men to take Care of the Intereſt of Religion, that have none themſelves; how incongruous would this be? And what could we expect from ſuch? Will they in good earneſt ſeek the advancement of what they hate? With what Face and Courage can they execute the good Laws upon Offenders, who live in the violation of them themſelves? Will they diſcountenance Sin & Vice among a People, who are daily encouraging it by their Practice? Such muſt be good Men, as well as knowing Men; otherwiſe they will be like to deſtroy more good, than they will do.

And now, I would with ſuitable Deference apply my ſelf, to our honourable Judges and Juſtices. And what is now requeſted of you, is, the vigorous, faithful, impartial Execution of all thoſe wholeſome and good Laws, which are made, or may be made, for the encouraging of Piety and

Virtue, and the diſcouraging of Vice and Wickedneſs. *Take heed* (Sirs) *what ye do: for ye judge not for Men, but for the Lord, who is with you in the Judgment. Wherefore now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no Iniquity with the Lord our God, nor reſpect of Perſons, nor taking of Gifts*, 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7.

And it is greatly to be wiſhed for, that Under-Officers, *Grand Jurors* and *Tything-Men* eſpecially, would remember the Oath of God, which they are put under; and be quickned thereby faithfully to diſcharge what they are ſo ſolemnly obliged unto. And may ſuch as are faithful, have all poſſible Encouragement given them, in the way of their Duty.

I go on to ſay, It greatly ſerves the Intereſt of Religion in our Churches, when they are ſupplied with a learned, orthodox and godly Miniſtry; and this is the Province of our civil Rulers. 2 *Chron.* xvii 8, 9. And they ſhould encourage the Hearts, and ſtrengthen the Hands of the Miniſters of Chriſt, in the regular diſcharge of their Office. Their faithfulneſs may ſometimes expoſe them, to the rage and fury of unreaſonable and wicked Men: You, who *are the Shields of our Earth*, ſhould guard them againſt their Inſults. With good *Hezekiah*, you ſhould *ſpeak comfortably to them.* And like him, and that excellent Governour, *Nehemiah*; take care, that they be ſupported; that being freed from the Cares and Incumbrances of the World, they may give themſelves wholly to their Work.

And now, let me recommend unto our civil Rulers, the good Education of the *Children* and *Youth* among this People. Let not the Laws made, for the ſupport of leſſer Schools thro' the Land, be ſham'd and eluded, as too often they have ſhameſully been.

And

And let the great School of the Prophets, be tenderly cheriſhed, maintained, and carefully inſpected by you. Take care, that the College be a Seminary of pure and undefiled Religion, as well as good Literature.

We would mourn this Day the Death of the late reverend and honoured Preſident of that Society †, and our great Loſs therein; for he was a faithful Man, and feared God above many. May God, with whom is the reſidue of the Spirit, fill up that vacancy with One that ſhall be a rich Bleſſing to the College, and to the whole Land. May thoſe, who are more immediately concerned, in fixing a Preſident there, be directed to chuſe One that is of eminent Learning and Wiſdom, of ſound Principles, a faſt Friend to theſe Churches, endow'd with a Spirit of Government; and to crown every Thing elſe, one of ſhining Piety; who will make it his Buſineſs, to promote vital Religion, as well as Learning, among our Youth: exhorting and comforting and charging every one of them as a Father doth his Children. This is the way to have a converted Miniſtry, without which we muſt not expect a converting Miniſtry.

Our religious Intereſts have a great dependance upon the College. If that Fountain be kept pure, the *Streams thereof will make glad the City of God*; but if corrupted, the Churches will ſoon be infected. So it far'd with the *Belgick Churches*, when one of their illuſtrious Schools, became ſuch a troubled Fountain.

Permit me (Honourable Rulers) to mention one Thing more, which may greatly conduce to the advancement of Religion among us, and that is, your

† Mr. *Benjamin Wadſworth.*

ſetting good Examples before us. Examples are very influencial, eſpecially the Examples of Rulers are ſo. This is evident from the Carriage of God's People of old, who commonly walked with, or contrary to God, as their Kings, were good or bad. If then you would have your People behave ſoberly, righteouſly and godly; ſee to it, that you lead ſober, righteous, and godly Lives your ſelves.

So have I put our civil Fathers in remembrance of ſeveral Ways, that are to be taken by them, for our Reformation. Will you now be pleaſed to ariſe to the Work, with an unwearied Application. God, we hope, will ſucceed and proſper your ſincere and pious Endeavours. However this be, they will find acceptance with God thro' Chriſt; you will enjoy the Satisfaction and Pleaſure of having done your Duty; and ſhall not miſs of the Reward of good and faithful Servants in the heavenly World.

I come now,

2. To addreſs my reverend Fathers and Brethren in the Miniſtry. And let me beſeech you to uſe your conſtant, painful, and faithful Endeavours to promote the Intereſt of Religion among us. Our recovery from that Apoſtacy, that we are fallen into, as to outward Means, does principally depend upon ſuch your Endeavours; and they are no more than what God and Man expect from you, and you are ſolemnly obliged to.

Reverend and much Eſteemed: Allow me here, mean and unworthy as I am, to put you in mind of a few Things, the obſervance of which, may greatly contribute to the advancement of the Kingdom and Intereſt of Chriſt among us.

And in the firſt Place, I humbly propoſe, that as the Apoſtle Paul among his *Corinthians*, ſo we among our People, *determine to know nothing, but Jeſus*

Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified. Let Chriſt be the principal Subject of our Preaching. Let us lift him up on high in our Congregations, and diſplay his Glory before our People: The glory of his Divinity, the glory of his Humanity, and the glory of the Conſtitution of the Perſon of Chriſt, who is both God and Man in one Perſon. Let us preach of the Offices of Chriſt, of his precious Benefits, of the indearing Relations he ſtands in to his People; and of his moſt excellent Example. Is Chriſt the very Marrow, Soul and Scope of the holy Scriptures? Then ſuch Sermons, as have much of Chriſt in them, come neareſt to thoſe ſacred Records, and we may conclude are moſt likely to do good. It is juſtly to be feared (Sirs) that one great Cauſe of the woful decay of vital Piety in the chriſtian Church, is the neglect which has been in preaching Chriſt. Let us hear what the excellent Dr. *Watts* ſays, "Let us Miniſters conſider how "little has been our *Succeſs*, in compariſon of "the Multitudes converted by our Fathers, in the "Day of their Miniſtry. Now it is worth our In-"quiry, Whether it may not be aſcribed unto the "*Abſence of Chriſt* in our Sermons. And what "Reaſon indeed can we have, to expect the Pre-"ſence and Influence of the Spirit of Chriſt, if we "leave his Perſon, his Offices, his Grace, and his "Goſpel, out of our Diſcourſes; or give but a "ſlight and caſual Hint at thoſe glorious Subjects, "which ought to be our daily Theme! Bleſſed be God, we have had Fathers, who have been eminent for their preaching of Chriſt. And it is Matter of Thankfulneſs, that we yet have Fathers among us, who account, "Chriſt the favourite "Subject in the Courſe of their Studies for the "Pulpit." Let us, my Brethren, by all Means copy after them.

I go on to ſay, that the Truths of the Goſpel, particularly, the important Doctrines of Grace, are a moſt preciousTreaſure committed to our Cuſtody. *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy Truſt.* But how ſhould we keep them? Surely, not to our ſelves, ſo locking up the Key of Knowlege. But we muſt communicate them to others; we ſhould preach thoſe important Doctrines to our People. Give me leave to mention ſome of them, even as I find them laid down and expreſſed in a Pamphlet among us, bearing this Title, *A ſeaſonable Teſtimony to the glorious Doctrines of Grace, at this Day many Ways undermined in the World*: Conſidered by a generalConvention of Miniſters,meeting at *Boſton, May 28th.* 1702; and voted by them, to be publiſhed, for the Eſtabliſhment of the Churches in the preſent Truth.

They are ſuch as theſe. "*That* the moſt high "God, hath from all Eternity elected certain Per- "ſons from among the Children of Men, to be "brought unto eternal Happineſs, in and by Jeſus "Chriſt; and this Decree was not founded in the "*Foreſight* of any Merit or Goodneſs in the Cho- "ſen, but in the meer good Pleaſure of God, who "made choice of them: *That* the elected of God, "are in his everlaſting *Covenant of Redemption*, "after a peculiar Manner given unto our *Lord* "*Meſſiah*, who therein undertook to be their *Head*, "and their Redeemer: *That* the *Redeemed* of the "Lord, ſhall be in his Time and Way, every one "of them infallibly made Partakers of effectual "Vocation, and have the Benefits which he hath "purchaſed for them applied to them. *That* fal- "len Man having loſt the *Freedom of his Will to* "*ſpiritual Good*, he will not believe and repent, "and anſwer the Call of the Goſpel, until a *ſu-* "*pernatural Operation* of the Spirit of Grace upon "him,

" him, do change his Will; which Operation is
" beſtowed in a Way of meer ſovereign Grace,
" upon thoſe only that are ordained unto Life.
" *That* upon a Sinner's accepting that Favour of
" God by Faith, God imputes to him the *Righte-*
" *ouſneſs* of that active & paſſive Obedience, with
" which the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, appearing as the
" Surety of his People, has fully anſwered the Law
" of God for them; and the Sinner is *juſtified* be-
" fore God, in that Righteouſneſs of the Lord Je-
" ſus Chriſt. *That* every Believer on the Lord
" Jeſus Chriſt, being by Faith united unto him,
" does henceforth glorify his Lord, in doing the
" good Works of *evangelicalObedience*, by aStrength
" derived from him; which *good Works* are the
" Fruit and Proof, but not the Cauſe of his Juſti-
" fication. And finally, That the Saints of God,
" ſhall perſevere in their Sanctity, and nothing
" ſhall make them fall totally and finally from that
" Grace, wherein they ſtand, and may *rejoyce in*
" *the Hope of the Glory of God.*

Now when I ſay, that theſe great Truths of the Goſpel ſhould be preach'd; none will underſtand ſo, as if I thought the preaching of chriſtian and evangelical Duties were a needleſs Thing; no, we muſt *not ſhun to declare the whole Counſel of God*, but muſt preach the before mentioned Truths, as the Foundation of practical Religion, & without which the Life and Power of Godlineſs is not like to be maintained! 'Twas well ſaid by Dr. *Owen*, " *Goſ-*
" *pel-Truth* is the only Root whereon Goſpel-Ho-
" lineſs will grow. If any Worm corrode, or any
" other corrupting Accident befall it, the Fruit
" will quickly fade and decay. It is impoſſible to
" maintain the *Power of Godlineſs*, where the Doc-
" trine

" trine from whence it ſprings is unknown, cor-
" rupted, or deſpiſed †.

I proceed,

To ſay, It may very much promote the Intereſt of Religion among us, to inſiſt upon the great Doctrine of Converſion; making that one grand Subject of our preaching. It was excellently ſpoken by a dear Brother,* in an *Election-Sermon* preach'd here, four Years ago, " I know not how we can
" begin with our Flocks better, than the great Pro-
" phet and Teacher did with *Nicodemus*, *Except a*
" *Man be born again, he cannot ſee the Kingdom of*
" *God*, John iii. 3." Let us teach the Nature of Converſion. Let us preſs the Neceſſity of it. And ſince the Law is our School-maſter to bring us to Chriſt, let us in the moſt clear and affecting Manner we can, repreſent to Sinners the dreadful Miſeries of Hell, that they are expoſed unto, and are in daily Danger of. Though our bleſſed Lord, was anointed to preach the Goſpel to the Poor; yet how frequently do we find him preaching up the Doctrine of Hell-torments to the Impenitent and Secure? It is needful that in this Way, ſleepy Sinners ſhould be awakened; this is ſome Preparation to a ſound Converſion. And ſince the Heart is ſo very deceitful, and Men are ſo apt to think themſelves rich, & increaſed with Goods, and have need of nothing; when they are wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked; it ſeems very neceſſary, that in our preaching, we labour to diſcover what thoſe Grounds, Reaſonings or Pretences are, upon which Men build their Confidence, and ſhew the Rottenneſs & Fallacy of 'em.

† See him of the Nature and Cauſes of Apoſtacy from the Goſpel. Page 456. * The Rev. Mr. *Wigglesworth*.

It

It was the ſaying of a Soul-ſearching Preacher, and happy Inſtrument in the Hands of God, of converting many a Soul to him; "For my own part, if I "had but one Sermon to preach while I lived, I "think this ſhould be it; to preach down all un-"grounded Hopes of Heaven: not to leave you "there in Deſpair, but that you may Hope upon "better Grounds, which will never deceive you †. Our Diſcourſes ſhould be adapted to reach Mens Conſciences, and not to pleaſe their Fancies.

And then, let us take Time for, and Pains in compoſing our Sermons: And when we have made them, let us labour to get our own ſinful Hearts into a due and ſolemn Frame to deliver them. It is a known Saying of the famous Mr. *Shepard* of *Cambridge*, and it deſerves to be written in Letters of Gold upon our Study-Doors: "God will curſe that "Man's Labours, that lumbers up and down in "the World all the Week, and then upon Saturday "in the Afternoon, goes to his Study: whenas God "knows, that Time were little enough to pray in, "and weep in, and get his Heart into a fit Frame "for the Duties of the approaching Sabbath *. O let us take Pains in our Preparations for the Pulpit! Let them ſmell of the Lamp; let them be beaten Oil for the Sanctuary; having in the firſt place, ſought to God to direct and aſſiſt us therein. And then, let us beg of God, that the holy Truths which we have got to deliver to others, may firſt be impreſs'd on our own Hearts, that we may ſpeak of them in a very lively manner. Very much depends upon this: for it is the Mind that convinces the Mind; and the Heart, that perſwades the Heart.

† *Baxter*'s Saints Reſt. p. 336.

* See his Life, in Dr. *Mather*'s Hiſtory of *New England*. Book 3. p. 90.

If we are burning and flaming in our own Breasts, there is the greater likelihood of inkindling holy Affections, in the Hearts of others.

Ministers should be Men of *Prayer*. We must give our selves unto Prayer, as well as to the Ministry of the Word. And in our Prayers respect must be had to the Success of the Word preached by us, that it may run and be glorified; prove effectual to the Conversion of Sinners, and the Edification of the Saints and People of God. "That Preaching that is not accompanied with continual Prayer for it's Success, is not like to have any great Blessing go along with it."

I find that holy Man of God, but now mentioned, viz. Mr. *Shepard* at such Strains of Piety as these; ‡ "I saw my Blessedness did not lie in *receiv-*
"*ing* of *Good* & *Comfort* from God, but in *hold-*
"*ing forth* the *Glory* of God, and his *Virtues*. For
"'tis, I saw, an amazing glorious Object, *to see God*
"*in the Creature!* God speak, God act; the Deity
"not being the Creature, nor turned into it; but
"filling of it, shining through it; to be covered
"with God as with a Cloud, or as a Glass Lan-
"thorn to have his Beams penetrate through it.
"---I saw it was my Misery to hold forth *Sin* and
"*Satan* and *Self* in my Course. And I saw one of
"these two Things must be done. Now because
"my Soul wanted *Pleasure*, I purposed then to
"*hold forth* God; and did hope it should be my
"*Pleasure* so to do, as it would be my Pain to do
"otherwise. O Sirs, this is what we have got to do, even in our Persons and Walkings, to hold forth and represent the Graces of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holiness of his Doctrine, which we preach.

‡ Vide p. 91, of the fore mentioned Book.

To

To expreſs his Humility, his Meekneſs, Self-Denial, readineſs for the Croſs, contempt of the World, heavenly Mindedneſs, Benignity, Condeſcenſion, Patience, &c. Such a Life as this, tends greatly to the Succeſs of our Miniſtry. It commands Reſpect and Reverence from our People, and our Preaching will come with more Authority, Force and Energy, and ſink deeper into their Souls. When we exemplify the holy Doctrine, which we Preach in our Actions, and live the Sermons which we deliver to others, this has a ſilent power of Attraction in it, to draw Men to their Duty. Beſides God will honour ſuch as thus honour him, 1 *Sam.* ii. 30. And will delight to ſucceed their Labours. ---*He walked with me in Peace and Equity, and did turn many away from Iniquity*, Mal. ii. 6. On the other Hand, when a Miniſter in the Courſe of his Life, holds forth the Beaſt, or the Devil; I mean the Luſts of the Fleſh, or the Luſts of the Spirit; he becomes contemptible, and deſervedly ſo, *Mat.* v. 13. And if once his Perſon is contemned, ſo will his Preaching be; and Men will not regard what he ſays. How much then does it concern us, that in all Things, we ſhew our ſelves Patterns of good Works. *Tit.* ii. 7. That we be *Examples of the Believers, in Word, in Converſation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.*

With Intrepidity of Soul, let us faithfully rebuke the growing Sins of the Times & Places, in which we live. That Scripture ſhould be often ſounding in our Ears, Ezek iii. 17, 18. *Son of Man, I have made thee a Watchman to the Houſe of Iſrael: therefore hear the Word at my Mouth, and give them warning from me. When I ſay unto the Wicked, thou ſhalt ſurely die; and thou giveſt him not Warning, nor ſpeakeſt to warn the Wicked from his Way to ſave his Life; the ſame wicked Man ſhall die in his Iniquity;*

but his Blood will I require at thine Hand. Let us be ſollicitous to underſtand our Duty; and when we know it, let us be bold and daring to do it. It was an honourable Character, that was given by a Great Man †, of Mr. *Knox*, that eminent Reformer in *Scotland*, at his Interment; "Here lies the Body "of him, who in his life Time never feared the "Face of any Man". * Let us be fond of the Character our ſelves; and not fear the Faces, nor ſpare the Faults of any Offenders, when called of God to Reprove them. Iſai. lviii. 1. *Cry aloud, ſpare not, lift up thy Voice like a Trumpet, and ſhew my People their Tranſgreſſion, and the Houſe of Jacob their Sins.*

Catechiſing is a moſt needful and excellent Work. And what not only Parents and Heads of Families are called to, but Miniſters alſo. Moſt expreſs are the Words of our bleſſed Lord to *Peter*, and in him to all ſucceeding Miniſters of the Goſpel, *Feed my Lambs.* And where ſhall be find a better Catechiſm, than that which one of the greateſt and beſt Men ‡ that ever the Iriſh Church ſaw, declares to be the beſt extant in the World. Let us ſee to it, that the young Ones of our Flocks, get this by Heart: And not only ſo, but let us take Pains, to lead them into a good Underſtanding of the great Truths and Duties of Chriſtianity contained therein. And when this is done, let us ſelect ſome of the weightieſt Points, and apply them to their tender Souls in a warm Addreſs: This is the Life of all, and may prove a Means of their early and ſaving Converſion to God.

Abundance of Good may be done among our People, by viſiting of them; and entertaining them,

† The Earl of *Murray*. * *Clark's* Marrow of Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory. Book 1. p. 343. ‡ Dr. *Uſher* ſo pronounced of the Aſſemblies Catechiſm.

with

with our pious Diſcourſe; ſuiting them with agreable Addreſſes; inſtructing, exhorting, reproving, counſelling, and comforting them, as there is Occaſion. And perhaps, we may receive, as well as do a great deal by ſuch Viſits. *Rom.* xv. 24. The Apoſtle ſpeaking there to the believing *Romans*, ſays, *Whenſoever I ſhall take my Journey into Spain, I will come unto you: for I truſt to ſee you in my Journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if firſt I be ſomewhat filled with your Company.* The Communion of Saints is filling, not empty, vain and frothy, as the Company of moſt is; but adminiſtring Grace and Comfort to thoſe that enjoy it. Let us then, as our more weighty Duties will allow attend this part of Duty alſo.

Before I paſs from this Head of Viſiting, allow me to ſay, we ſhould as we have Opportunity therefor, make our friendly Viſits to each other. In ſuch Viſits, Men of your high Station and Character, will diſdain a low, grovelling, inſipid, trifling Converſation. Your Converſation with each other, will be polite and learned; by all Means let it be religious too. 'Tis ſaid of thoſe two excellent Miniſters of Chriſt, Biſhop *Uſher*, and Dr. *Preſton*, That after much Diſcourſe of Learning and other Matters had between them, the Biſhop would ſay, "Come Doctor, One Word of CHRIST now before "we part. Beautiful! charming Example! But I'll go higher than this. We read of the Seraphims, Iſai. 6. 3. *That one cried unto another, and ſaid, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hoſts, the whole Earth is full of his Glory.* They cried one to another, and ſaid; as if they would by their holy, and heavenly Language, inflame each other's Breaſts. Let now the Angels of the Churches, go and do likewiſe.

If after all, we meet with Sufferings from thoſe, to whom for Chriſt's Sake, we have (thro' Grace) been

been faithful Servants; with baſe and unworthy Treatment from thoſe, for whoſe good, we have ſpent our Lives and Strength, let us not be ſurpriſed at it. It is a Temptation, but common to the beſt of Miniſters. It is to try our Patience! O for the Goſpel Sake, that that be not hindred, let it have it's perfect Work in us. Let us now, *not be overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good.* In ſuch a Caſe as this, let us hearken to the good Advice, which the venerable old Mr. *Eliot*, was wont to give his Brethren, when complaining to him, that ſuch and ſuch in their Flocks were too difficult for them. 'Brother, (ſays he) Compaſs them! 'And, Brother, Learn the Meaning of thoſe three 'little Words, *Bear, forbear, forgive.*' Brethren! Let none of theſe Things move us, neither let us *count our Lives dear unto us, ſo that we may finiſh our Courſe with Joy, and the Miniſtry which we have received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the Goſpel of the Grace of God.* Let us ſoar above 'em. Let us live above 'em, even in Heaven, and then we ſhall better bear the Hardſhips, which we may meet withal here upon Earth. Are our Labours of Love, ill-rewarded by Men? Let us *be ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; for as much as we know that our Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

There is one Thing more, which I can't well paſs over; ſuffer me to offer that, and I ſhall have done. It is, that we be very careful to maintain Peace and Unity among ourſelves; and not ſuffer different Sentiments in ſmaller Matters to divide us, and drive us into Parties. You are very ſenſible (Rev. Sirs,) that as the Truths of our holy Religion, are not all equally great and neceſſary; ſo neither are they all alike clearly revealed. Some Truths compared with others are leſſer, more darkly

revealed

revealed, and far leſs diſcernable. Hence it cannot be expected, but that we ſhall have different Apprehenſions about 'em; tho' at the ſame time, we may be well agreed, in the more weighty Matters of the Goſpel. What ſhall we do in this Caſe? Different Apprehenſions in many Matters of Religion, we ſhall have while here in this World; ſo many, ſo various, are the Cauſes of 'em, that it is impoſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe with us. Unity of the Faith is not to be expected, till we get to Heaven; or the new Jeruſalem comes down from God out of Heaven. Shall we grow cold in our Regards and Affections to one another? Shall we grow angry with one another, becauſe of theſe unavoidable different Sentiments? By no Means. But let us be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly Love, in Honour preferring one another, notwithſtanding. Let us not ſpend any of our Time in wrangling & bitter Diſputes, about theſe lower, dark and doubtful Matters: Let us not ſpend too much of our ſhort Time in any kind of Diſputes about them; but keeping them in their due Subordination, let us with one Heart and Hand, with one Shoulder and Conſent, lay out our ſelves in promoting the common Intereſt of Chriſt's Kingdom, and the common Salvation of precious and immortal Souls. By all Means, let us eſpouſe generous Principles; let us breathe a catholick Spirit; let us be one with every one, that is one with Jeſus Chriſt; whether they be Lutherans, or Calviniſts, Epiſcopalians, or Presbyterians, Congregationaliſts, or Antipœdobaptiſts; or whatever other Denomination they may be of. I have met with a Paſſage of the very excellent Mr. *Matthew Henry*, which ſeems worthy of a Remark, with which I ſhall cloſe this Head. "The Differences (ſays he) that are "among Chriſtians, tho' fomented by the Malice

"of

" of Satan for the Ruin of Love, are permitted by
" the Wiſdom of God for the Tryal of Love, *that*
" *they which are perfect* therein *may be manifeſt.*
" Herein a Chriſtian commendeth his Love, when
" he loves thoſe who differ from him, and joins in
" Affection to thoſe with whom he cannot concur
" in Opinion.

Thus I have preſum'd to addreſs the Fathers of the Country, civil and eccleſiaſtical; and having ſpoken to 'em ſeparately, what if I ſhould now join them together? May they ever be ſo in their Eſteem of Love and Affection to each other. So *Moſes* and *Aaron* met in the Mount of God, and kiſſed each other. And it might very much conduce to the Advancement of Religion among us, if theſe two Orders of Men would join their Counſels, & unite in their Conſultations about the Ways & Methods in which to purſue it.

But it is high Time for me to come to a Concluſion. If then we were conſtant & fervent in our Prayers and Supplications for the Effuſions of the Holy Spirit upon us; and were our Prayers accompanied with our ſincere & vigorous Endeavours to carry on a Work of Reformation? Did we in the ſeveral Places in which God hath ſet us, whether private or publick, lay out ourſelves to promote the Intereſt of dying Religion among us; we might then hope, that we ſhould not be termed, *forſaken*, & *deſolate*; nor made to ſigh out our *Ichabod*, and ſay, *the Glory is departed from us*; but that the Name whereby we ſhall be called, ſhall be *Jehovah Shammah*, the Lord is there. And *happy is that People, whoſe God is the Lord.*

FINIS.

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